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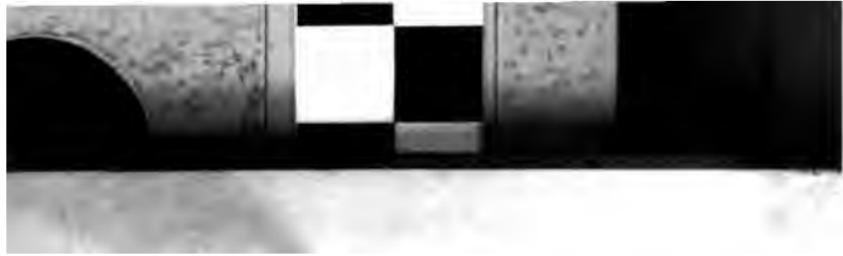
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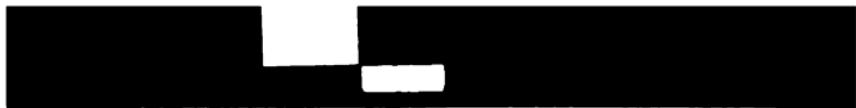




HISTORICAL TALES

OR

THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES.



HISTORICAL TALES

OF

THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES.

"The history of these remote times seems almost a romance,
and the romance of those times is closely allied to history."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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PREFACE.

WHEN a new orator makes his débüt in Parliament, or when a young author ventures to lay a first production before the public, it is the custom to deprecate criticism in certain established formulas of “requesting the wonted indulgence of the House” (or reader, as the case may be) for the maiden effort.

But, alas ! if the speaker is below mediocrity, the pathetic appeal will not prevent honourable members from dozing on the benches, even if they refrain from the coughings &c. which are a senatorial epidemic in such cases ; nor will it

induce people to read a book which is dull or flippant, or both. On the other hand, if merit is discoverable in either aspirants, the said apology is a mere matter of supererogation.

If, then, the Author of these sketches ventures on a few prefatory lines, it is only to acknowledge, that part of the description of Osric's vision in the beginning of the first story is taken from the poem alluded to in the notes, and that the idea of the second was suggested by a delightful ballad of Mr. Rose* on the death of William Rufus, which monarch's memory has been treated freely enough (and I cannot help thinking, rather too harshly) by both playwright and romance writer, of late. The story itself was intended for one of the Annuals of

* See Introduction to *Marmion*, Canto 1st.

1838, but growing rather beyond the length allowable in those productions, the Author has been induced to offer it to the world in the present volumes, preceded by a tale founded on a local tradition, and confirmed by contemporary history.

July, 1838.



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THE SEA KINGS.

A STORY OF THE TIMES OF ALFRED THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

“ Fair woods were there, and fertilizing streams,
And corn fields spreading wide, and villages,
As though for many a year the land had been
The land of peace.”

SOUTHEY—“ MADOC.”

ON the southern coast of Sussex, near its western extremity, bordering on Hampshire, a huge shapeless ridge of chalk-down, called Bow-hill, raises itself, eight or nine miles inland, overlooking the tract of level and fertile country which spreads from the foot of the declivity

down to the sea shore, like a gigantic sentinel detached from the main body of the South Downs, and forming an advanced guard. The eastern and south-eastern sides of this elevation are scooped out into several deep and abrupt dells, the largest of which is clothed with thickets of holly, ash, and juniper, and distinguished by a grove of yew trees, of such an age and enormous size as are seldom or never to be met with elsewhere, except singly in some of our country church-yards, forming altogether a secluded scene of extraordinary and picturesque beauty. A few scattered trees of the same sort are also to be found on the summit of the hill, but stunted and distorted in their growth by the effects of the south-western blasts, which sweep keenly over the waste, impregnated with salt spray from the channel and the great Atlantic ocean. Short furze and heather clothe the ground between them, varied here and there with dwarfish

blackthorns, whose branches are twisted into a thousand fantastic and capricious shapes, and variegated with the black and white mosses and lichens which thrive in abundance on every stick and stone.

But a very different scene is presented to the eye on descending into the low country, and entering on the rich fertile district lying south of the city of Chichester, called anciently the Manwode. There the land is intersected by broad ditches, whose sides are waving with tall rushes, and the banks decorated with large and luxuriant ferns, among which the broad shining green leaves of the hart's-tongue or spleenwort bear witness to the dampness of the alluvial soil. Heavy crops of all kinds of grain everywhere meet the eye, and large herds of kine are seen lazily chewing the cud under the elms, and among the grey willows. About the end of the seventh century, this territory or barony was

granted by King Edilwalch, monarch of the South Saxons, to St. Wilfred, formerly Archbishop of York, who landed on the coast, and converted the inhabitants to Christianity. It is recorded that two hundred and fifty of the natives were baptized by the Saint, who, "at the same time enfranchised them of all bodily servitude and bondage, (as expressed by an old writer,) whom he made free both in bodie and soul," they having been given to him as slaves attached to the soil, in the same manner as other cattle. Nearly two hundred years had now elapsed since the first Christian church was raised, and the inhabitants had lived in content and tranquillity, under the peaceful rule of Wilfred's successors in the episcopal office, employing themselves in agriculture and fishing. Their houses were, it is true, only clay huts, thatched with rushes; but there was an air of order and cheerfulness about the inhabitants

that shewed they had felt the benefit of the glad message preached to them, "of peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

Several small churches diversified the landscape with their low wooden spires, and though of no more imposing materials than a modern barn, yet the interior of these rural sanctuaries exhibited a neatness and cleanliness that would put to shame the mouldy and damp mildewed walls of many of those edifices which have been reared in their places.

Near one of these stood a cottage, of scarcely more pretensions as to size than those which surrounded it, but the marks of a careful hand and higher taste were visible in the few flowers and creepers, neatly trained to a trellis, which enlivened its precincts. At the door sat a man of middle age, whose hair and curling beard were already sprinkled with a considerable share of grey; his features were mild and placid,

and benevolence looked out from his clear intelligent eye and broad forehead. His dress was a loose gown or long tunic of coarse iron-grey cloth, and he had shoes or buskins of untanned leather; close to his knee was his son, a boy of fourteen or fifteen, with lively, cheerful looks, learning the mysteries of the manufacture of nets, an art of which St. Wilfred had been the first communicator to the rude tribes he was thrown among, as tradition reported. At a little distance from her father and brother, the daughter of the priest,* a fair and lovely girl of eighteen, was listening to her betrothed bridegroom, who sat next her on the bench. Edith

* The celibacy of the clergy had not (at this period) been introduced into England, even in the existing monasteries, where the monks lived something in the manner of canons or prebendaries, both intermingled, in some degree, with the world, and endeavouring to render themselves useful to it; while it was not fully established among the parish priests till long after the Norman conquest.

was one of those whose gentleness and kind-hearted simplicity make the observer grieve that such should ever be destined to feel the weight of the sorrows and cares of life ; and yet it sometimes happens that they suffer more than the ordinary share of misery and troubles with unexpected fortitude and calmness.

Kenwulph, her brother, was the first to notice the approach of another individual who was advancing towards them ; it was a man of eight or nine and twenty, who, though tall, was of a light and active make, unlike most of the Saxon race, whose heavy strength was usually accompanied with a corresponding boorish heaviness of look and manner ; his hair and eyes, too, were darker than theirs in general, though neither could be described as of a deeper hue than brown and bluish-grey. His dress was a short tunic, reaching to the knees, like a Highland kilt, and secured with a broad leathern girdle,

below which his legs were defended by broad strips of the skin of some animal, wound round them in the manner of buskins. A sheep-skin cloak protected his shoulders from the weather, and, as well as an iron-bound and shod staff, shewed that he had made a journey of some miles.

Cheerful and affectionate were the greetings the young man met with from the pastor Etelulph, and his son, and if there appeared any slight embarrassment in the reception the betrothed lovers gave him, a casual observer would have set it down to the knowledge of the fact that the day following was the one fixed for their union. But it was not so, there was no affectation or false refinement and delicacy in that age or society, and we must look for other motives to explain why Edith only casually raised her eyes to the countenance of the newcomer, with a look of melancholy interest, and

if they met his, were instantly withdrawn and fixed upon the ground, with a blush and faint sigh almost inaudible.

Osric and Oswald were the sons of one of the richest of the *Coliberti*, or free tenants by inheritance,* who held lands under the bishopric, named Ceowald. As the priest's daughter grew up into womanhood, the two brothers, who lived in constant intercourse with his family, became each enamoured of the fair Saxon girl. Osric, the elder of the two by three or four years, was the first to perceive that his brother's affections were also fixed upon the maiden who was the object of his own. Intelligent, open-hearted, and generous, his character was decidedly superior to that of his younger brother, in whose temper a slight tincture of selfishness

* Probably copyholders, as they were called afterwards, to be distinguished from *Frankleins*, who held their land as frank and free property of their own.

and disinclination to exertion, had always been visible ; yet no vices or bad passions had empire over the minds of the two sons of Ceowald, who had lived from childhood upwards together in the most affectionate friendship. It was a sore trial for Osric, when he made the discovery that the increased energy of his brother's improved disposition proceeded from the influence of Edith's charms, and still more so when it also became evident that she gave the decided preference to Oswald. Once certain of the fact, he immediately determined to conquer his own passion, and withdrew to a distance among the hills, leaving the principal share of their patrimony to his more fortunate junior. It is but fair to Oswald to record that, on learning the generous sacrifice his brother had made, he exerted the nobler feelings of his nature, and offered to give up his pretensions in his turn. Osric was firm, and, in order to

lessen the reluctance the lovers felt in accepting it, he forced himself to appear indifferent, and even to be present at the nuptials, which, as we have said, were on the eve of their celebration.

But having kept the reader waiting so long at the door, it is now high time to introduce him to the interior of the humble dwelling of the Saxon pastor.

Etelulph was a man of superior mind and understanding, and was regarded by his parishioners as one of extraordinary erudition, for he had learnt to read in his youth, and a copy of the holy Scriptures having accidentally come into his possession, rescued from the pillage and spoliation which most of the large monasteries underwent in those turbulent and warlike times, he had with great labour and perseverance succeeded in making himself master of nearly the whole of its contents. This rare and precious volume was accordingly considered a treasure of

no ordinary price, and a small shrine of wood, neatly carved, in which it reposed, formed the chief ornament of the principal division of the cottage, which was neatly plastered and white-washed within, though the other space under the roof was occupied with a cow-stall and other offices. But the floor was strewn with green and fresh rushes, the table was rubbed bright, and a few flowers attested the care and taste of Edith's superintending hand.

The evening repast proceeded, and the priest, who was himself more cheerfully disposed than usual, soon noticed that something weighed upon Osric's mind; his answers were vague and absent, and he constantly relapsed into a thoughtful silence, which threw a kind of gloom over the little circle, for his brother and Edith were pained to see his reserve, which they attributed to the circumstances with which we have acquainted the reader. A noise was heard—it was

only the wind whistling through the crevices—yet Osric started, and looked hastily round with more eagerness than there appeared any rational cause for.

“Osric,” said the priest, earnestly, “I perceive there is something on thy mind which we know not of. Thou and thy brother have ever been to me as sons, and now you will be so still more in future—let me, then, know thy trouble, if my advice or experience can avail.”

“Thanks, worthy father,” returned the young Saxon, “thanks; but I will not disturb this festive occasion with what your wisdom will call an idle foreboding.”

“It is, indeed, idle to forebode evil,” said Etelulph, “and far wiser to be prepared to meet it when it does come as we ought to do. There is no cause, I trust, to forebode any evil at present, though the future is ever in the hand of God.”

“Thou sayest right, O father.—It was no doubt an empty vision; I will try not to think more of it,” added Osric.

“How so?” inquired the other; “what vision meanest thou?”

“I would I had not spoken of it,” replied the young man; but, on being further pressed by the others to explain what he meant, he related his story as follows:—

“On my way hither you are aware I had to cross the summit of Bow-hill, whose blue top you have seen to-day wrapped in clouds and mist, as it was when I ascended its sides. The grey fog prevented my seeing any object half a bow-shot from me, and every branch of the thorns was covered with trembling drops. I have often stood on that hill and breathed the free air with a feeling of delight, but at that time I felt as if it was the dark atmosphere of the dungeons we have heard of, and my knees

seemed to bend under my weight. All was as silent as midnight. Think not I jest, father, when I say I saw a female figure, of stature exceeding the tallest man, with a face of terrible and stern beauty, mounted on horseback and clothed in armour, pass swiftly through the mist; before I had quite lost sight of her, a second form, precisely similar to the first, followed in the same direction; a third, a fourth, came on as I gazed—the number was six in all; they turned not, nor looked to the right or left, and the heather did not bend under their horses' feet, nor the drops fall from the twigs on their path. A strange curiosity made me follow, as if in a dream, the course they took; it was one of the steepest parts of the hill, where the snow-drifts lay deepest in the winter; on a smooth barren space I saw them through the fog circling round and round, while fragments of an almost unintelligible song reached my ears.

It made too deep an impression on my memory ever to be effaced ; and thus it ran—

‘ The raven scenteth the corses,
And the charger already neighs ;
Woe to the race of Hengist,
The fair-haired Saxon,

For the mighty ones are riding over the blue salt waters ;
The steel is sharpened,
The bows are drawn,
The grass shall be red
Beneath the feet of heroes :
The spoil shall be taken,
The prey divided ;

But their places already are prepared in the lofty hall of Odin,
They shall not return :
Woe for the mighty—’

“ As I listened, the words became more and more indistinct, and the phantoms appeared to melt into the surrounding mist. I tried to breathe a prayer, and in proportion as my voice gradually returned to me, so the clouds seemed to disperse, and I found myself alone upon that vast hill, with the sea and land stretched out before me, and no sound audible but the

plaintive cry of the plovers, who flapped along slowly and heavily in their flight."

Osric ceased, and young Kenwulph, who still kept his eyes fixed in deep interest on the countenance of the narrator, murmured aloud, "They must be the Valkyriur!"*

"Peace, boy!" said the pastor. "It was doubtless a delusion of the evil one," added he, after a long pause; "for it is not to be denied that he walketh at times through waste and desolate places, or that he deceiveth the eyes of men with false appearances and signs. But let us have no fear, my children, for I trust we all have the assurance of a clear conscience and a pure faith for our protection."

* The Valkyriur, or Maids of Slaughter, were, in the ancient Scandinavian mythology, charged with the office of choosing out those who were to fall in battle; of bearing the invitation of Odin to the most distinguished; and of pouring out the beverage of the gods, ale or mead, for the souls of the heroes in the celestial halls of Valhalla.

Edith looked up at her father with a smile of renewed confidence, for she had turned pale at the relation of Osric, and drawn closer to her betrothed.

The next morning dawned brightly and gaily, and the village maidens came early to offer fresh flowers to the bride, and to accompany her to the church. They preceded her, singing cheerful songs as they went; and about half-way to the porch they were met by a band of young men, among whom were Osric and his brother, with green boughs in their hands. Advancing to the church porch, where Etelulph stood in his priestly vestments, surrounded with the elders of the hamlet, they divided into two ranks on each side, leaving the betrothed pair standing in the centre. Oswald and Edith approached and bent the knee before him; he paused for a moment as he looked affectionately at his daughter, and prepared to perform his

office. But the first syllables had scarcely passed his lips when the words were cut short by a messenger who ran breathless into the astonished circle, and cried, with a voice of terror and dismay, “ The Danes ! the Danes !”

A shriek from the women followed these fatal words, and all was instantly in confusion ; for though the inhabitants of this peaceful and retired district had hitherto been exempt from the inroads of these marauders, still they had heard tales which made the heart sicken of the atrocities perpetrated in other places throughout England. No one knew which way to turn or what to do ; wives clung in tears to their husbands’ arms, who knew not in what manner to protect or to pacify them. In the midst of the general perturbation, their pastor alone preserved his coolness and presence of mind. The messenger, in answer to his questions, informed them, that on the evening before, as

some children were gathering shell-fish by the sea side, they had been suddenly terrified by the appearance of a fleet of more than 150 small vessels, with all their sails set, rapidly approaching up the arm of the sea called Cymen-ora.* The prows and sterns were high and pointed, the ships themselves long and narrow, with a range of oars on each side; and the children saw men of gigantic stature and long flowing hair on board, who shouted to them, in a language which their fright prevented them from perceiving was almost precisely similar to their own. The idea of defence was vain, and Etelulph immediately gave direction for the emergency.

“ Let the cattle be instantly collected,” he cried; “ drive them up into the hilly country

* After Cymen, the son of the Saxon Ella, and brother of Cissa, kings of the South Saxons; now Chichester-Harbour.

—with all speed, to take refuge among the woods and forests. Let not a moment be lost, every instant is precious ; let not the ploughman stay to finish the furrow, or the housewife to knead the dough. Every man must hasten the departure of what is most dear to him. Kenwulph, thy intelligence is beyond thy years, bear these tidings and warnings to our nearest neighbours, then join our flight. Osric, thou wert ever swift of foot as the wild deer, remember, life and death are on thy speed, and proceed to rouse the inhabitants ; bid them arm and provide for their safety as they best can, by flight, or by repairing to the fortified city. Alas ! that these things should fall on our days !”

All was in motion, as the population dispersed to fulfil the suggestions of the priest. Edith and Oswald were standing in momentary stupefaction. “ Oswald, to your charge I trust my dearest treasure, your own affianced bride,”

said her father ; “ delay not, but place yourselves in the van of our march ; most anxious am I for you to reach some spot of refuge.”

Edith burst into tears. Oswald looked towards her and cried out, (for he was by no means deficient in bravery,) “ Father ! give me a spear or a pike—nay, even a sling and smooth stones, like the stripling David, whose history you read to us lately, and I will go at the head of the young men against these heathen robbers—for our cause is just, and victory must surely attend us !”

The priest’s eye kindled for a moment with enthusiasm as he looked on the young bridegroom, whom the sudden emergency seemed to have inspired with almost miraculous vigour and energy ; but his countenance fell after a moment’s reflection.

“ Nay, my son ——” and he paused as he spoke, “ I will not answer thee as Saul answered

the young Bethlehemite. At thy age I should have spoken like thee, perchance; yet now there will be time for the contest hereafter: remember that we must provide for the safety of one so justly dear to both of us." Oswald was silent.

Edith returned to her father's cottage for a moment, and was quickly ready to set forth: holding the arm of her betrothed husband, they put themselves at the head of the little party, who now began to take the track which led northwards.

Every moment some peasant or other joined the march, driving before him the oxen, or the unmanageable, clamorous swine, which formed all his little wealth. The women came out of their houses with their infants in their arms, leading the elder ones by the hand; their wailings and lamentations, mixed with the cries of the men, the noise of blows, and the lowing

of the cattle, formed a painful and discordant accompaniment to that scene of confusion.

Etelulph saw one group depart after the other, for he disdained to seek his personal safety in flight whilst any of the helpless still remained. Comforting, exhorting, gently hastening the dilatory, directing everything, he at length, with feelings of satisfaction, beheld the last inhabitant come forth: he paused yet a moment; his eye fell on the mound of turf where, but two years before, he had laid the remains of the partner of all his pleasures and toils; for a few seconds he knelt by the grave, then rose to look around; all was solitary in that church-yard where one short half hour before nearly the whole population of the hamlet had been assembled, with cheerful countenances, and blameless gaiety in their hearts. He was about to leave that well-known spot also, perhaps never to revisit it; and a crowd of reminiscences

of the last twenty years he had passed there as a minister of the gospel came over him with melancholy force. But the sounds of the fugitive peasantry became fainter and fainter ; and as he looked, a slender column of smoke curling upwards in the horizon warned him that further delay was fraught with peril,—the work of devastation was begun. With a heavy painful sigh he grasped his staff, and followed in their track,—though full of apprehension, yet not desponding, and with a firm and steady pace which soon enabled him to overtake the last in the march.

A small tract of open common was now gained, and they began to hope they should yet be safe ; while Etelulph put up a mental prayer for his little flock's preservation, urging them at the same time not to relax their speed.

But it was not to be so. On a sudden the heavy clattering of a body of horse behind them

was heard, and the loud savage cries of the riders soon broke upon the ears of the terrified fugitives, calling on them to stay, which only added to their unavailing efforts to escape. Three or four of the foremost horsemen were quickly at their side. Etelulph, who was last in the line, turned to implore compassion, but as he viewed the stern figure of their leader his heart sunk within him : the stature of the Dane was nearly seven feet in height ; his eyes gleamed in a ferocious manner from under thick eyebrows ; his head was uncovered except by his long red hair, which streamed behind him down to his girdle like a horse's mane ; although his followers wore defensive armour, his muscular arms, well-formed legs, and breast, were bare ; but a twisted chain collar and bracelets of gold marked his dignity of chieftainship, and the dark brindled skin of a wolf thrown over his shoulders completed his attire, already stained with blood in

more than one place. He looked on the priest with a frown of contempt, as the latter ventured a few words of supplication, and stretched out his hand to the horse's bridle. "Off, dog of a Saxon," cried he, spurning the old man from him with violence. At the same moment almost, one of the next who came up made a thrust with his spear, which transfixes the unfortunate suppliant's arm, and a blow from a third savage levelled him with the ground. A cry of horror rose from the villagers, and Oswald, who was at the head of the column, rushed on with the bravery of desperation against the Danes; but upwards of two hundred more of the invaders had now reached the scene of action, and surrounded them. It was in vain; the confusion and bloodshed which followed were too frightful to be described; and Oswald found himself, Edith, and a few more of the villagers, captives, in the power of the fierce and terrible Sigurd.

Carried away by his impetuosity, he had left her, for the moment, unprotected in the front of the little troop, while he attacked the assailants who approached them in the rear. Unfortunately, the eagle-eye of the Danish chief had been attracted by the figure of Edith, and swinging his tremendous iron-spiked mace round him at arm's length, the Sea King had made his way to where she stood, crushing and prostrating, like a hurricane, everything, man or beast, which found itself on his path, and seized her as his prisoner. Edith neither screamed nor fainted ; a sort of stupefaction took possession of her senses, and she allowed herself passively to be conducted away. Oswald had struggled with the utmost determination against superior numbers, till at length, exhausted and over-powered, he found himself, with his hands firmly bound behind him, once more by the side of her whom he had hoped to greet before noon

as his bride, but who now seemed reserved for a slavery more terrible than the idea of death itself. As their eyes met, Edith seemed, for the first time, to recover the use of her faculties, and become sensible of her situation as a captive.

CHAPTER II.

“Oft o'er the trembling nations, from afar,
As Scythia breathed the living cloud of war,
And where the deluge burst, with sweepy sway,
Their arms, their kings, their gods, were rolled away,
As oft have issued, host impelling host,
The blue-eyed myriads from the Baltic coast.”

GRAY.

IN the meantime, the remainder of the Norsemen had proceeded, under their other leader, Anlaf, brother of Sigurd, and his equal in ferocity, uncommon stature, and strength, to the southern part of the peninsula of Selesea, where Wilfred had first landed, and where he had erected a church within sight of the coast. The edifice, rebuilt and enlarged by some of

his successors, was low and heavy, though sufficiently capacious ; the pavement and lower part of the walls only were of limestone, the upper part being of wood, and thatched with rushes. From the broad open space in front, a magnificent sea-view over the coast and the channel spread itself in varied beauty, bounded by the lofty Isle of Wight with its grey cliffs. The air was calm and still, and the blue waves sparkled with light under the cheerful influence of the sun. Yet, instead of being peopled with happy and peaceful groups, occupied in agriculture or games of strength and activity, that space was lined by sturdy Saxon landholders and peasantry, armed in haste with whatever arms chance threw in their way at the moment. Here, the heavy flail rested on the muscular shoulder of its owner, ready for use as a club ; there, the woodman's hatchet was ready, destined for a mortal strife it was never originally framed

for, with other implements of husbandry hastily converted into defensive weapons. A heavy gloom was upon every countenance as the men stalked to and fro with teeth clenched in fearful determination, only now and then exchanging a word in whispers. It was an awful spectacle to see that unusual assemblage, and the deep silence preserved, under that clear sunshine.

The interior of the cathedral, even then imperfectly lighted, was filled by the aged people, women, and children; some unable to repress their sobs, and all looking timidly and anxiously in each other's faces, as if to find courage and support in companionship. Several of the priests were gathered round the steps of the rude altar, on which stood a large crucifix carved in wood. In the midst of them stood the aged bishop, Wechtune, supported by his pastoral staff, with his long silvery beard, and his flowing hair, surmounted by the low rounded

mitre. After a pause, the song was resumed at intervals, in which all present joined, however tremulously :—

“ From the tempest’s lightning flash,
From the battle’s fearful crash,
From the wasting pestilence,
From famine dire, be our defence !
From the Norseman’s heathen brand,
From the cruel Pagan’s hand,
Gracious Lord, deliver us !”

There was another long and fearful pause. Many were the looks turned towards the great western door, which had been secured, as well as the time would permit, with heavy oaken beams fastened across it ; for among that primitive and simple population, bolts and bars were, in ordinary times, unnecessary for the entrance of the house of God. Everything was still as yet, however, and the song was resumed again.

An aged priest started, with an exclamation of fear. Every tongue was hushed, and every

ear listened with painful anxiety. Is it the sound of a distant tempest muttering ? or the waves of the sea beginning their hoarse murmur? Every cheek was blanched. A moment after, a loud and savage yell converted their fears into certainty ; it was answered by a shout of patriotic defiance from the husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers, on the outside of the edifice, and the sounds of a desperate conflict ensued. As the noises increased or decreased, receded or approached, so fluctuated the hopes and fears of the trembling inmates. At length, clouds of dense smoke began to roll towards the windows, and the roofs of the peaceful dwellings around were seen flickering and smouldering at intervals. A despairing scream proceeded from the women, and all crowded round the spot where Wechtune stood, endeavouring to cling to, or at least to touch, the hem of his garments. He tried, but for some instants in vain, to procure

the cessation of that fearful lamentation. The moisture stood in the venerable prelate's eyes; at length, when a momentary interval of silence allowed him, he raised his voice to address his flock in a few words of exhortation to courage and confidence in Heaven. It was low and choked with emotion at first, but, gaining strength as it proceeded—like the wind, which at first wails in low melancholy accents, but rises and swells in its course,—he commanded them to raise the 54th Psalm; “Deus! in nomine tuo salvum me fac, &c.,” beginning it himself with a steady and composed demeanour that communicated courage to the rest. As the choral sounds proceeded, fearful blows were heard, which drowned the voices within and the cries without; heavy and redoubled strokes were falling on that door from the ponderous battle-club of Anlaf; the planks and beams were no more than a momentary impediment

before the mighty strength of arm of that gigantic Dane ; they yielded, with a fierce crash, and the infuriated Sea King was visible in the chasm, with his black hair streaming round him, and his half-naked colossal figure covered with sanguinary marks of the strife he had been engaged in.

But we must pause, and draw a veil over the frightful scenes of horror which ensued.

The sun went down in calm and serene beauty, as if his beams had rested on no crimes or horrors such as we have had to relate. How melancholy it is, on turning from those painful scenes and gazing on the quiet face of nature, to reflect how nearly a paradise this earth might be, with its quiet opportunities for reflection and rational enjoyment, and yet how mankind, with their violence and bad passions, turn the

fairest scenes into a desolate wilderness, and fill the thoughts of their fellow creatures with bitterness and vexation of spirit, even of such as are not personally subjected to misery and deprivation.

The still evening air sounded with the revelry of the Danes. Like a destructive torrent in winter, which has burst its banks, they had spread themselves over the face of the country, and hitherto no serious obstacle had been able to impede their career of devastation. Satiated with plunder and wearied with slaughter, the ferocious invaders had returned to the neighbourhood of their ships, which lay at anchor, and established a temporary camp near the shore. The arm of the sea alluded to lay extended before them, like a quiet inland lake, so smooth and glassy was the water; luxuriant woods stretched along its sides, and the lofty blue hills bounded the horizon. The Sea Kings

held high festival, and the quiet shore echoed with their shouts and cries of triumph.

For a long series of years these barbarian inhabitants of the Scandinavian peninsula had been accustomed to leave their country and to make descents on the coasts of England, and France, at that time ruled by the degenerated successors of Charlemagne, where they were known by the name of Normans, from the place of their birth, and subsequently established themselves, soon after this period, in the province called by their name. But the fertile English counties were the chief scene of their ravages ; they even passed the winter in the sea-ports occasionally, and laid waste the country around. If the force of the county assembled, and were able successfully to repulse them, the Danes betook themselves to their vessels, and, setting sail, suddenly invaded some distant quarter, which was unprepared for defence.

Their religion tended to keep up and encourage their barbarous predatory style of life. The deities of Scandinavia were represented, like most false gods, as beings of the same dispositions and passions as themselves. If a warrior met his death in battle, he was supposed immediately to be conducted to the halls of Odin, in the palace of Valhalla, where ale and mead were presented to the departed in the skulls of their enemies. Everything conducted to form a ferocity of manners which in modern times we can form little idea of. A chief, always of distinguished birth, and great muscular strength, with a reckless contempt of danger, procured a few ships for a predatory excursion ; his countrymen willingly followed any prosperous leader who gave them hopes of booty ; and as the whole population of maritime countries stood in awe of his ravages, he called himself a Sea King, and the ships under him were meta-

phorically called horses, and even sometimes dragons. The vigilance and military talent of King Alfred (for that great and good sovereign was then in occupation of the throne) had, it is true, checked their inroads in some degree, and, in fact, totally prevented them for several years together ; but, nevertheless, he had not entirely subdued or expelled them, and they continued occasionally to harass the peaceable population. A famous Danish chief, Hastings, had, after ravaging all the provinces of France along the sea coast and the rivers Loire and Seine, been obliged to quit that country, more by the scarcity consequent on the desolation he himself committed, than by the resistance of the inhabitants. Three hundred and fifty vessels sailed under his orders, and landed on the eastern coast of Sussex. The course of the war in which the English monarch had engaged against them had driven them into Essex ; but

at the same time, some of those restless northern tribes, encouraged by the descent in the south of so large a body of their friends and countrymen, had broken into rebellion, and with a fleet of upwards of two hundred vessels, appeared on the south-western shores. Sigefert was the name of their leader, who had framed vessels of a new construction, higher, longer, and swifter, than those which Alfred had caused to be made for the defence of the country; but the pagans under his command were more willing to follow the two brothers Sigurd and Anlaf, whose ferocity of character pleased them more than the calculating slower cunning of Sigefert. These two had left Denmark as mere boys, and when defeat had subdued the spirit of their companions so much as to induce them to accept the generous and benevolent offers of Alfred on regaining his throne,—namely, to allow them to settle peaceably in Northumberland under their own

chiefs, on condition of submitting to the ordinance of baptism ; yet these two refused with dogged obstinacy. In the wild and remote mountainous districts of Northumberland they had grown up from the activity of youth to the mature strength of manhood, and when their fellow Danes, urged by their ever insatiate and inveterate thirst for war and depredation, engaged in this new expedition, their reappearance was hailed with shouts of delight. Such were the Danes who now indulged in wild wassailry on the banks of the beautiful Cymenora.

The common or open tract where the fugitives had been overtaken by Sigurd and his party, was surrounded on all sides by cultivated lands, intersected with ditches, except in one direction, where a thicket of low trees and brushwood extended for about half a mile along a sloping bank, where grew some decaying hollow trunks of oaks and willows. As the moon rose

in silent splendour from behind their dark twisted shapes, which stood out in relief against the light clouds, her beams fell on a spectacle which can only be fully imagined by those who have had the fate to see a field of battle after the slaughter is ended. The bodies of cattle and horses lay in various directions, and amongst them the bloody remains of many of the Saxon peasants: neither age nor sex had been spared in the general massacre, and the tender infant lay in the coldness of death by the side of its grey-haired grandfather, whose paternal dwelling was now reduced to a heap of smoking ruins.

The wind occasionally, as it sighed, brought with it the voices of song and festivity from the encampment of the invaders: by degrees these became less and less frequent, then ceased altogether, and a dead silence reigned undisturbed.

What is this human figure that advances from under the dark shadow of the thicket, and

pauses in its trembling progress to look round upon what seems only a fit rendezvous for the wolf and raven? He bends over many of the corpses to examine their features; he wrings his hands in utter abandonment to sorrow; he at last seats himself on a large stone, and tears come to his relief.

It is the boy Kenwulph, who was in the act of returning to join the line of march of the villagers, when the terrible shouts of the fray broke on his ears, and his young eyes for the first time rested on a wild scene of horror and carnage. One of the hollow trees on the bank was near him, and the sudden impulse of self-preservation had made him conceal himself within it. There he had stood long after the sights and sounds of terror passed away, still undiscovered, though several of the Danes passed close by his hiding-place. As he sat in the pale moonlight on that deserted common, and felt himself lonely, with-

out -refuge or a friend in the world, who but that morning had been in the full tide of youth, health, and high spirits, his tears flowed for some time uninterruptedly. At length, when a calmer moment had succeeded, a slight noise attracted his attention ; he listened earnestly, and sprung to his feet, for the idea of the Danes was still present to his mind ; but no living thing was seen to move within the range of his sight. Again the noise fell on his ear : it was a groan from some of the victims of the ferocity of the pagans, heard distinctly.

Kenwulph shuddered ; but the idea came to his mind that even he, weak and friendless as he was, might be able to render some succour to one even more unfortunate than himself ; and he began the search, sickening as the task was, among the dead bodies, to discover which had given these signs of life. At last his attention was drawn to a body which lay at twenty or thirty

yards distance from the rest, and as the rays of the moon enabled him to remark the dress more particularly, a thrill of mingled sensations shot through his frame ; it was one most familiar to him, but the countenance was turned away. He approached it with a beating heart, and stooped down to examine the features—it was his father !

The priest was unable to articulate, but he unclosed his eyes and seemed to recognise his son, who was supporting his father's head on his knees, and chafing the cold stiff hands between his own. But what could the boy do further ? Etelulph was weak and faint with loss of blood from his wounds, and totally unable to walk ; the other's youthful sinews had not yet the powers sufficient to support such a burthen to a place of safety, even if he had known whither to bear him. He seemed only to have recovered consciousness in order to die in compa-

nionship with his son. Summoning all his remaining strength, he raised himself, and attempted to move, with the assistance of Kenwulph, towards the thicket which lay at no great distance ; but after a few yards they were obliged to desist, in utter despair of succeeding.

An hour had passed away in this helpless, desponding condition, when at length they saw a human figure approaching ;—but it seemed about to pass by at some distance. It could not be a Dane, for the carousers in their camp were all buried in sleep ; it must then be a Saxon, and Kenwulph left his father's side to seek assistance from the stranger. The man was proceeding onwards, with a swift and determined step, when the priest's son met him, and, placing himself directly in his path, joined his hands together and begged, if he whom he addressed was indeed a Saxon and a Christian, to assist him to remove his wounded father to any

place where he might be sheltered, and out of sight of those rapacious marauders.

“Thanks to God!” cried the stranger, as he seized Kenwulph’s hands between his own, “thanks to God, thy father still lives then. Where lies he now? And *she*?—and thy sister?” added Osric, with a lower and more tremulous voice.

The boy was overwhelmed with joy at recognising a friend, but he could not give any distinct account of the fate of his sister. He had seen one or two women carried away by the Danes, but terror had prevented him at the time from observing further. None of the dead that lay on the common, however, at all resembled Edith, so that the distracting conclusion to which they came was, that she was a prisoner.

Etelulph groaned heavily; the fate of his daughter struck a keener pang to his heart than the bodily pain he felt; and often, whilst Osric

and the boy were conveying him to the thicket, short interjections of the deepest grief escaped his lips.

But when they had deposited their honoured load under the shelter of the thicket, there was no couch for him but the damp ground—no protection from the weather; and the rapid throbings of his pulses and temples portended the approach of violent fever.

Osric bit his lips in the highest perplexity, as he stood watching the suffering and helpless form of Edith's father, who lay stretched at his feet; but young Kenwulph, whose elastic mind had already begun to recover itself in some measure from his distress, suddenly pointed out a diminutive hovel, which stood at the distance of nearly a mile, under a willow, remote from any habitation; it had escaped untouched. In that frail and scarcely tenantable abode, there lived a woman whom extreme old age and mis-

fortunes had bent nearly double, but her skill and experience in herbs and the art of healing made her an object of respect and veneration to the simple population, who, indeed, had an almost superstitious confidence in the resources of her art. To her care Etelulph was consigned by his supporters, and when she overcame her first terror at being roused in the night to receive an apparently dying man, covered with blood, into her miserable hut, she soon lit a few sticks, and, having warmed some water, dressed the wounds of the priest, with the assistance of his son, and administered a soothing drink to her patient, who fell into an uneasy slumber.

Leaving Kenwulph to watch by the side of his father, Osric returned to the heaps of dead on the common, and anxiously scrutinized them for a considerable time, without finding the features of her he sought. The grey dawn was just beginning in the eastern part of the sky

when he relinquished his search ; and as he stood in the midst of that terrible spot, he raised his clenched hand towards heaven, and his pale lips moved inaudibly as he made a mental vow of employing all his energies of soul and body in future to accomplish the utter extermination of the ravagers of his native country, and the rescue of her whose image still pervaded his thoughts in spite of himself. He pressed his hand forcibly on his temples, as if to still their throbbing ; he looked round once more, and sprung off, with a quick pace, northwards from the spot which had witnessed his stern determination.

CHAPTER III.

“ Stand to your arms ! be firm !”

THE ancient city of Regnum, built first by the Romans under Antoninus, had decreased in importance, and little beyond the fortifications remained, when the fierce Ella founded his kingdom of the South Saxons. Cissa, his surviving son and successor, turned his attention to civilization and the arts of peace, fixing on Regnum for the seat of his government, and giving it his own name—that of Cissa-Ceaster. His reign of seventy-six years, free from war, unequalled for length and tranquillity in the annals of Britain, had raised the Roman station to the condition

of a flourishing city. The walls, composed of huge mounds of earth, faced externally with hewn stone, according to the invariable practice of the Romans in their colonies, formed a regular oblong square, pierced by four gates, corresponding to the points of the compass, of low and heavy architecture. Thither had the terrified peasantry fled as to a place of security, and the streets were crowded with herds of cattle, intermixed with crowds of the Saxon population, of all ages, in confusion and dismay, who had flocked in during the night. But the city was neither destitute of municipal authorities or military commanders, and before the sun had risen many hours a certain order had already been established in some degree, so that many of the robust and powerful peasantry were armed, and placed along the summits of the walls, making a formidable appearance, in numbers, against any foe who might present himself.

And it was not long before an occasion was found to put them to the proof, for the sentinels looking over the flat meadows which lay to the westward, shouted to their fellow-citizens that they saw the Danish cavalry approach. The *Æalderman*, whose authority all respected in the hour of danger, gave strict commands that whilst those who were already armed should line the walls, no hands should be raised or voices heard till he gave the signal for attack. A body of from eight hundred to a thousand of the invaders were soon descried rapidly nearing the city; but as soon as they perceived the battlements covered with armed men, they halted, and wheeled round to reconnoitre. A few of their number advanced, led by the brother kings, Sigurd and Anlaf, who rode side by side at the head of twenty or thirty of their followers, most of whom had steel skull-caps, and many wore shirts of flexible chain mail; heavy maces,

spiked and loaded with lead at the end, five feet in length, were hung at their sides. Their chiefs, however, as we have described already, disdained the use of defensive armour, trusting alone to their own fierce and indomitable impetuosity in battle; and imitated in this the famous champions of Danish story, the songs of whose wild exploits raised the enthusiasm of their warriors to the highest pitch. They drew near in peaceable show, halting at about one hundred yards from the stone archway of the gate, above which stood the *Æalderman*, surrounded with numbers of the chief citizens. A breathless pause ensued, each waiting in silence for the others to speak, during which the keen eye of Sigurd scanned attentively the strength of the walls, and the preparations for resistance on the part of the besieged. At length the deep and powerful voice of Anlaf was heard.

“ Saxons ! we, the kings of the ocean, demand

of you to open your city gates, and furnish us with cattle and stores."

"And in whose name, or by what authority, ask you of us, good King Alfred's subjects, to obey your words?" was the reply of the civic officer, in a somewhat lower key.

"Look round at our numbers," interrupted the more artful Sigurd; "our men are numerous as the sands on the sea-shore, our ships like the trees in the forest. Odin, the mighty god of war, is with us, and woe to the hand that is raised against us — its owner shall feed the wolf's and the raven's maw."

"There can be no peace between us, proud Dane!" returned the other. "Ye have wasted our lands with fire and sword, slain our priests, and carried our women into captivity; our arms are ready to avenge them. And think not we fear, if thy demon-powers assist thee; we trust in One who is mightier than all

to defend his people from the hand of the enemy."

A sarcastic laugh lit up the features of Sigurd ; but the dark brows of Anlaf contracted, and he was about to break forth in contemptuous menacing defiance, when his bridle-hand was grasped by that of the former, who leant towards his ear and spoke a few words in a low tone. The Danes turned their horses, and rejoined the main body, who moved off immediately, apparently in the direction of their ships ;—in a few minutes afterwards, however, it was evident they were wheeling round to make an attack from another direction, as those who watched on the south walls saw them crossing the meadows below the town in an easterly direction. Accordingly, the citizens placed themselves on their guard, and when the Danish force presented itself before the eastern gate, they found it even more strongly guarded than

the others, the walls bristling with pikes and crossbowmen, and the heavy arch of the gate—way of Roman bricks completely barricaded with waggons, drays, &c.

Baffled in this manœuvre, they raised a yell of rage, and made another circuit northwards; like beasts of prey, seeking to find an inlet into an enclosure which protects a herd of sheep and cattle from their ravenous appetites. There was yet one entrance—the northern, and upon that they made a simultaneous rush, hoping to force the barrier; it was, however, not less secure than the rest, and as the foremost Danes endeavoured to cut away part of the oaken gates with their battleaxes, they found it blocked up with the same insurmountable obstacles, while a storm of missiles rained down on their heads from the battlements above.

The efforts of the two chiefs to force their way were something almost superhuman; but it

was not long before they became convinced that they were only losing the best of their warriors, without the hope of gaining any advantage in return. Grinding their teeth with disappointed fury, both Sigurd and Anlaf retreated with their followers to a little distance, where they formed in battle array, and set up a shout of defiance to challenge the Saxons to leave the protection of their walls, and meet them in open fight. Some of the younger combatants, in their eager zeal, would have instantly sallied forth, but the prudence and sagacity of their leaders restrained them ; as it was, they contented themselves with returning the shout of the enemy with a triumphant and confident energy which made the air ring again.

Anlaf snatched a javelin, and, rising in his stirrups, hurled it with the whole force of his gigantic arm full against the city gates. The iron head pierced deep into the plank, and

buried itself in the solid wood, while the tough ashen shaft trembled and quivered like a bulrush waving in the wind. The horsemen cheered loudly at this demonstration of the strength of arm of their ferocious leader, who turned sulkily and slowly away, and led them on to further devastations in the open country, leaving the Saxon inhabitants of the city of Cissa in half-doubting but joyful surprise at their own successful resistance to the attacks of the Pagans, when they saw the invaders depart from before their walls.

CHAPTER IV.

“ For in a day of darkness and of storms,
An evil day, a day of woe,
To thee the sceptre fell,
Prince of the mighty Isle.”

SOUTHEY.

THE next day, before noon, a traveller descended from the Downs, which lie eastward of the ancient city of Winchester, into the rich valley of the Itchen river. Peace and plenty were around him, and the stately towers and newly built monasteries of the city rising out of the verdure announced that five years of peace under the government of Alfred had sufficed to enable that royal residence to recover from the

effects of the burning and devastation of the Danes at a former period.

The ancient palace of the Saxon monarchs had indeed been pillaged by the invaders, but its walls were mostly of solid masonry, and as the sovereigns of Wessex, one of the principal kingdoms of the heptarchy, under whose auspices it was built, had sought to attain grandeur and convenience in their dwelling, according to the ideas of those rude ages, by means of increased size and spaciousness, rather than by any other mode, it had suffered but little in consequence from the inroads of the Norsemen. A considerable army was encamped in and round the city and its suburbs, while the neighbourhood of the palace, where Alfred was himself resident, exhibited all the stir and bustle of head-quarters. There was even more excitement visible than usual, for, the night before, Etheldred, Duke or Earl of Mercia, who had been left in command

of the garrison of London, (which city now had entirely and cordially submitted itself to Alfred's government,) had arrived at Winchester with the wife and sons of Hastings, the Danish chief, as prisoners of war. The greatest curiosity was raised in the town by their arrival, but Alfred had commanded them to be lodged in a separate wing of the palace, and carefully protected against intrusion. The apartment in which they were confined consisted of two large low-roofed halls, with an inner closet or oratory beyond them ; and though to the eye of modern refinement their furniture would appear rude, yet they bore by no means a contemptible appearance to the Danish captives. The walls were decorated with stags' antlers and other trophies of the chase, while soft rushes strewed the floor, and supplied the place of a mat or carpet ; the seats were of heavy solid carved oak, it is true, but their covering was of cloth,

ornamented with deep fringes of the woollen that it was composed of, being an unusual piece of luxury in those times, when the skins of wild animals were the usual articles made use of for such purposes. A table stood covered with food, which it was evident had been scarcely touched. As the attendants threw the door wide and announced the approach of the King, their words sounded hollow through the vacant apartment, and a child's head, which was visible at the entrance of the inner closet, was hastily withdrawn a moment before the Saxon monarch entered.

Alfred was at this period rather more than five-and-forty; his stature was noble and commanding, in spite of the slight infirmities which the incessant vicissitudes and hardships he had undergone in the course of his long and stormy reign had impressed on his figure. His countenance was oval, and the features cast in the

most attractive mould, so much so, that, though exposure to the weather and the chances of war had left their traces on the face, and the brown hair and beard were thinner and more sprinkled with grey than when he first led his countrymen against their Danish foemen at the age of twenty-two, having but just performed the obsequies of his brother and predecessor, yet still every English heart burnt with even warmer love and loyalty towards the mature politician than it had felt in the first admiration of the youthful hero.

His high forehead gave a dignified and intellectual expression, while the serious thoughtful eyes gave the beholder at once confidence by their benevolent look, and convinced him by their penetrating glance that it was no common sagacity which would be able to impose upon their possessor. Though his dress was of the simplest form and darkest colour, except on

occasions of state, when he knew too well the value of appearances not to appear gorgeously clad, yet the merest stranger would at first sight have distinguished the King from Etheldred of Mercia, on whose arm he leant as they entered the apartment, without almost the possibility of a mistake.

The Earl of Mercia started and bent his brows as he perceived the apartment to be vacant; while Alfred's look, as it wandered round the walls, expressed some surprise.

“Was not my coming announced?” asked the King of one of the attendants behind him.

“It was, my Liege,” was the answer.

“Blame me not, my royal master,” said Etheldred, “if this woman is sullen and discourteous; she has spoken not one word good or bad since I captured her in the taking of the castle at Bremfield.”

They advanced into the other apartment,

which was fitted up as a sleeping room, with couches, hung with ample draperies ; but it was tenantless as the first.

On looking into the small recess alluded to, however, they at length beheld the wife of Hastings, who had retreated into the farthest spot allowed her, like a wild beast that tries to avoid the gaze of man by crouching in a corner of its den. Her black hair was dishevelled, and as she sat on the ground, with an arm round each of her sons, a momentary glance was all she bestowed upon her conquerors, and she dropped her head on her bosom as before ; there was no trace of a tear on the countenance of any of the three.

Alfred contemplated the group for some time in silence.

“ Hilda ! ” called the Earl of Mercia, “ raise thy looks from the ground ; thou art now in the presence of that prince who is my master and thine.”

Alfred held out his hand, with a smile, to one of the boys, who was about ten or twelve years old, but the young Dane clung to his mother with a look of distrust and suspicion.

“ And has my young namesake forgotten me again so soon ? ” asked the King, still holding out the proffered hand. “ And you, too, who are their mother, dismiss your fears ; they and you are in safety.”

“ King Alfred,” said Hilda, raising her head at length, and shaking back her long dark tresses as she fixed her eye full upon him,—“ King Alfred ! we are in thy power ; lead us forth to die, or to any punishment thou wilt ; we know our fate, and thou shalt see if the wife and sons of a Sea King shrink from the approach of death. But neither they nor I will live to be thy slaves and degraded pensioners ; *that* thou canst not make us do. I have said.” At these words she drew her children closer to her, and

fixed her eyes on the ground with an air of sullen determination.

The king and his brother-in-law exchanged looks.

“ And what thinkest thou that thy husband would give, that thou and these two fair sons of *his* should be returned in safety and honour ? ” asked Etheldred.

Hilda made no answer ; the Earl repeated his question, thinking she had not heard him.

“ My husband jests not with *his* captives,” she returned at length, in a low voice, with bitter emphasis.

“ Hilda ! ” said the monarch, in a voice which roused her attention at once, “ listen to my words. Thy husband came to this fair realm, laying waste and pillaging everything on his path. What had I or my Saxons done to provoke him ? When I came against him with my armies he sought for peace, and was contented

that these thy two sons should be instructed in the sublime truths of the Christian religion, and be received into the church by baptism. I joyfully held them at the font and performed my part ; Hastings bound himself by a solemn oath to abstain from molesting my subjects, and to withdraw from my dominions. Has he kept his plighted word ?”

Hilda was silent.

“ Has he not, on the contrary, built castles, and fortified himself against me, and engaged in fresh attacks on my unoffending people ? Duke Etheldred has taken his castles and possessions ; it is well ; and those I shall not return, for I can trust him no more. You say you are prepared to die ; and doubtless severe justice would not allow you to pass out of my hands scatheless. But learn, Alfred wars not with women and children, much less with those whose parent he has become spiritually. You

are free!—you may depart when you are inclined, and tell your pagan husband such are the lessons of revenge which the Christian religion teaches."

The wife of the Dane stood up in bewildered stupefaction, scarcely believing the evidence of her own senses, while the boys looked alternately from Alfred to their mother in uncertainty how to comprehend what passed.

"Would it not have been better, my Liege—" began the Duke of Mercia; but the king stopped him short.

"My good Etheldred, let me follow the dictates of my own heart; consult thine own—would it not have done the same?"

Etheldred was silent, and the benevolent King turned his attention to his prisoner, now no longer one. But it was with considerable difficulty that she could be made to believe or understand that her release was free and un-

conditional; nor were her apprehensions entirely dissipated till Alfred's daughter, the Princess Ethelswitha, came into her apartment, and entered into conversation kindly with her.

The King in the meantime had drawn his godsons towards him, who now were eager to make up for their former shyness; but he found, to his infinite vexation, that no sooner had they returned to their father than he dismissed the Christian monk who had been entrusted with their instruction, and caused them to relapse into idolatry. It was not, however, very long before an attendant came in all haste to inform the King that a messenger had just reached the camp from the kingdom of the South Saxons, and desired an immediate audience for the most important tidings.

Alfred rose, and, accompanied by Etheldred, proceeded instantly to the hall where he was accustomed daily to give audience to his officers

and chiefs of his army, as well as to sit personally to hear the petitions or complaints of any one who came to appeal to the justice of the monarch.

The hall of dais, as it was called, from the Saxon name of the raised step, or portion of the floor which was elevated at one end above the rest of the pavement, as a place for persons of rank and dignity, was already filled with the nobles and military chieftains, with here and there an ecclesiastic or man of letters (for these terms were nearly synonymous at the time), with his flowing beard and dark garments. Nor were suitors of an humbler rank wanting; for the presence chamber of Alfred was open to all his subjects without distinction or restraint. On this occasion it was even more thronged than usual, and the usher, or door-keeper, with his white wand, was obliged to bar the entrance to those who were pressing on from behind, till

those within should make space for them by retiring. The buzz of conversation was loud and universal, when the monarch entered; but on his well-known form appearing in the doorway, the accustomed respect towards him stilled every tongue in a moment; and as he took his seat as usual, a deep silence reigned through the apartment.

Presently a young man made his way through the crowd, on hearing Alfred's inquiries for the messenger from Sussex. His tall and active frame was clad in the simple dress of the peasantry, and his whole appearance shewed he had not delayed on the road, as he bent low at the footstool of Alfred.

“ What is thy name?” said the monarch, “ and what tidings bearest thou to me from my good and peaceful subjects?”

“ Osric, the son of Ceowald, is my name, O king!” was the reply.

“ And thine errand to Alfred’s court ? ” asked the other.

“ It is *this*,” answered Osric, as he drew from under his garments a large ring of silver, with a broad signet, on which was engraved a cross, with the Greek letters alpha and omega, between other characters of Saxon form.

Alfred took the ring into his hands, and examined it with surprise and curiosity for some moments.

“ It is the seal of Wechtune, Bishop of Selsey ! ” observed he, at length, with a scrutinizing look at Osric. “ Speak, young man ; how came this ring into thy possession ? or does that pious and venerable prelate require any service of us that he sends thee hither ? ”

“ The Bishop is beyond the reach of thy succours, O king ! ” replied Osric, in a voice which made a strange contrast in its calm hollow tones to the startling intelligence it conveyed.

“ Wechtune is dead, murdered in his own cathedral, at the foot of God’s altar: the fierce Danes have reduced the sanctuary to a heap of blackened ruins, and laid waste the whole country with fire and sword.”

A groan of universal horror and execration ran through the crowded assemblage: the countenance of Alfred flushed crimson as he started half up from his seat, then became suddenly pale as he sank down again.

“ Can this be true!—my wretched people! How long, how long are we to endure this! Proceed!” continued he, after a pause; “ tell us everything, without palliation.”

All crowded round, while Osric detailed the events which our readers are already acquainted with; and though the horrors he related were unfortunately but too common occurrences in the former part of Alfred’s reign, yet, after an interval of several years’ peace, they seemed to

recur with a thrill of double abhorrence to the minds and remembrances of the hearers. The King frequently interrupted the narrative with questions and interrogations as to the state of defence and natural position of the city and adjoining country, with the acuteness of an experienced general and engineer; nor did Osric himself fail to perceive that he had made a favourable impression by the answers he gave, which were intelligent and perspicuous.

“And are they not led by Sigefert, the Northumbrian?” asked Alfred.

Osric answered, that he believed two chiefs, named Sigurd and Anlaf, had accompanied him.

“And they came also from the westward? They are, doubtless, the same whose fleet landed at Exeter a month ago,” pursued the King; “whilst we have been here expecting an attack on the coast of Hampshire, and ready to meet them, the robbers have gone further east. I

marvel they escaped the vigilance of my brave Frisians, who lay at Southampton."

Alfred now stood up and addressed the assemblage.

" My lords, we had hoped that the incursions of these Danish wolves had been put an end to, and that the rest of our days might have passed in peace and tranquillity ; but Heaven has ordered it otherwise, and the sword we now draw shall never return to its sheath till either the country is freed from this scourge or the hand that wields it becomes lifeless !"

As the King spoke, he raised the glittering blade in the air, and an enthusiastic burst of applause broke forth simultaneously. The Earl of Mercia clasped the hand of his brother-in-law, and his eye lighted up with the fervour of his feelings.

As they were about to leave the hall, Osric fell at the King's feet, and seized the skirt of his garment.

“ A boon, O king ! a boon, I entreat !” cried the son of Ceowald, while a drop glistened in his eye.

“ Speak it !” said Alfred.

“ Let me, too, be a sharer in that glorious vow. I am not of royal or noble blood it is true; but allow me to fight by thy side in battle, and thou shalt see Osric’s blood freely poured out like water in our holy cause.”

Alfred looked at the young man for a few seconds, and granted his request, promising him to assign him a place in the foremost ranks of the battle, near his own person.

“ With a few hundreds of such hearts and arms as that,” observed he to the Earl, in a low voice, as they retired, and saw the animated countenance of Osric following them with looks of enthusiasm,—“ with a few more like that young Saxon, my task will be soon accomplished.”

Osric remained for some time so absorbed in the thoughts which crowded fast and thick across his brain, that he was somewhat startled when a subordinate officer came to seek him, in order to be regularly enrolled in the army, and to have the new duties which he had now taken upon himself explained to him.

He followed the officer out of the palace, and was conducted to the tents belonging to the company he was to be attached to in future. Little time, however, was allowed for preparation, for the whole army had caught the enthusiasm, which spread from the monarch downwards, and were eagerly anticipating the hour in which he should lead them against the enemy.

By dawn the next morning the whole were in motion; Alfred himself, on his war-horse, directing and animating by his presence the whole of the compact masses which moved forwards in

the grey light: and as the young Saxon stepped onwards he seemed to have entered on a new stage of existence, while every pulse throbbed with anticipation and enthusiasm at the career which lay before him.

CHAPTER V.

“ Madmen, he said, your strife forbear ;—
And thou, fair cause of mischief, hear
The doom thy fates demand !”

BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN, CANTO II.

WE must now return to the daughter of the priest and her betrothed bridegroom, who remained in the power of the invaders. It was not the usual custom of the Danes to make prisoners in their predatory excursions, but rather to put all those who resisted them to the sword, after seizing on all the cattle and moveables they could find. Occasionally, however, as in the present case, a few of both sexes were reserved as slaves to their conquerors: the number was small of those

whom Sigurd had spared for that purpose, and the vigilance of their captors left no room for any hope of escape.

The Danes had now formed something more like a regular encampment, and the spot on which they had established themselves was well chosen for the purpose. It was at the foot of Bow-hill, (described at the commencement of my story,) where wide undulating ranges of turf, over which the ploughshare had never passed, only dotted here and there with a few stunted junipers, prevented the possibility of a surprise by an enemy, especially as small outposts were established on the summit of the hill, as well as on another lower elevation to the south-east. Close behind the tents, and but a few hundred yards from the circle of their intrenchment, rose the dark evergreen foliage of the grove of yews, and harmonized well with the rude, savage appearance of the camp in that desolate place.

Marauding parties were sent out to levy contributions on the country round, and the spoils which they brought back furnished materials for the evening feasts.

Edith found herself treated with a kind of respect that surprised her ; a separate tent was allotted to her use, and it was only on presenting herself at the entrance that the scenes which met her eyes, and the strict watch she found kept over her by two Danish sentries, reminded her she was a prisoner.

She turned back into the interior of the tent, and seated herself on the ground, with a feeling of almost hopeless dejection.

Some hours had passed away in this manner, when the shadow of a figure suddenly darkened the entrance, and, stooping as he entered, the Sea King, Sigurd, stood before her, gazing with admiration on her beauty. It was some time before either spoke ; fear restrained her

tongue, and her fierce conqueror felt a kind of embarrassment as he looked, that was new and unaccountable to his feelings. Edith was beautiful, a woman, and a captive,—nay more, she was his property as the spoils of war, and entirely at his mercy; yet the Dane felt an involuntary respect in her presence, which seemed almost to reverse the position they were in to each other.

Sigurd spoke at first timidly, and with a gentleness foreign to his nature; but when the priest's daughter, in answer, only entreated him to allow her to share the lot of the other prisoners, his brow became gloomy and overcast: the sternness of the Norseman returned to him as he refused her request.

“I know not how to woo, fair Saxon,” he said; “but this I know,—that thou art Sigurd’s destined bride, and scores of thy countrymen shall serve before thee as slaves and menials.”

Edith shuddered, and her indignant rejection of the proffered honour seemed to perplex the Dane in no ordinary degree; he paced up and down for a time, and then stopped before his fair prisoner with a bitter smile, regarding her with much the same feelings as those of a boy who has succeeded in capturing a wild bird, and watches its helpless desperate flutterings against the bars of its prison.

“What wouldest thou have, maiden?” he asked at length; “the bride of Sigurd has only to speak, and what she desires shall be supplied. But let me see and hear no more of these tears and lamentations.”

Edith looked up, and passed her hand across her eyes: a sudden thought struck her, that she might endeavour to use such influence as she might have to soften the lot of the other captives, and by gaining time afford some future opportunity of escape, which they might take

advantage of. Deceit was painful to her, but she saw no other chance than an artifice, which seemed to her a pardonable one. These ideas passed swiftly through her mind, and she spoke, though not without a strong effort, to her captor.

“ O let the other captives be treated kindly for my sake,” she said, “ if you feel any interest in me.”

The Dane looked pleased and surprised at what appeared to him a change in his favour ; he stepped to the entrance, and gave some orders to the effect she wished, to some one who was waiting outside.

“ And now what more can Sigurd do to please his fair-haired bride ?” asked he, evidently flattering himself that Edith would, after a little time, cheerfully accept him.

“ There are yet other things,” replied the maiden, “ that place a barrier between us,

which must be removed before I can hear myself called by such a name."

"Of what barrier speakest thou?"

"Of a vast and wide one," returned Edith; "I am a follower of the pure and peaceful faith of the gospel; what can I then have in common with a worshipper of the stern gods of slaughter, and a venerator of heathen idols?"

Sigurd's countenance again became gloomy and ferocious.

"How, maiden! wouldest thou have me forsake the gods of my ancestors, who strengthen my arm, and give me victory in the battle?—that may not be. Listen!"—and he laid his broad hand upon her shrinking arm as he spoke—"the blood of a long line of heroes flows in my veins and my brother's, derived even from the great Odin himself; I have watched and wandered by night among the mountains and caverns of Northumberland, where no human foot but my

own had ever trod ; I have seen the moon* look down on me with his cold pale light ; I have heard the voices of my forefathers borne upon the night breezes—and I know I am destined to restore their worship and establish their dominion. Among those solitudes dwelt a man of more than human knowledge (who is now in our camp) ; he knows how to read the dark secrets of futurity ; he interprets the will of fate : a time shall and will come when the Danes shall rule all England—and thou, maiden, remember, art chosen to share the high lot of their chieftain."

Edith clasped her hands, and turned her face upwards to Heaven in shuddering apprehension. Sigurd felt her tremble, and added—

“ Such is thy fortune ; but fear not ! thou shalt follow thy own timorous faith without disturbance, but speak no more of *my* disowning

* The moon is a masculine deity in the Northern mythology.

the powerful gods of my race!—I must fulfil the ends of my destiny as it is written in the stars,—and who shall be able to resist or evade their solemn decree? I must win a throne; and that throne must be won through blood and warfare by the sons of Odin."

The priest's daughter was about to answer him, that there is another, higher power than his half-fabulous progenitor, and that man is free to choose his own course for good or for evil; but on raising her eyes to the face of the Dane she quailed before his terrible glances, and the deeply excited emotions visible in the dilated nostrils and the heavings of the broad chest of Sigurd, who evidently was firmly convinced and impressed with a belief in all he uttered.

A long pause ensued. The Dane had never before communicated to any one, not even his brother, the wild workings of his mind, and the lofty visions he indulged in of future ambition;

he imagined that Edith was dazzled and seduced by the prospect his words had opened before her ; but her silence continued, and when he looked again more earnestly upon her, he saw tears trickling down her pale and gentle countenance.

“ Nay, how is this ? weeping again ! This is no demeanour for thee, when thy high destiny is unfolded before thee. Dry thine eyes, fair Saxon ; or say,” added he, as a thought crossed his brain and deepened his frown, “ say, is there one of the prisoners whom thou regretttest especially ? ”

Edith trembled : she already felt that a word or a look from her would be Oswald’s death-warrant. Sigurd saw her trouble, and his countenance became pallid with wrath as he repeated his question.

The timid girl shrunk back ; but her feminine wit came to her assistance, and she replied—

“ My father, my venerable father ! will you not spare his grey hairs, and restore us to each other ? ”

The Dane felt relieved.

“ And who is thy father ? Is it the old priest who followed the villagers, and whom I struck down with my battleaxe, as he tried to stay me with his hypocritical whinings ? ”

Edith started to her feet with a scream of horror.

“ *His murderer !* ” she cried, in a half-stifled voice.

The fierce chieftain laughed. “ The banquet is waiting for us, ” he remarked, “ and my fair bride must be there to pour out the flowing cup for Sigurd and his brave warriors, as becomes the distinguished women of our nation, like the beautiful Erytha, and the rest of the Valkyriur who perform that office in the starry abodes of the blessed. Come ! ”

And seizing her arm with an irresistible grasp, he led, or rather dragged her after him, half fainting, to the principal tent, where the Scandinavian pirates held their feast.

The rude scene of festivity to which the daughter of Etelulph was so unwillingly introduced might well have dismayed a stouter heart than she possessed. The tent, if it could be so called, was of coarse thick materials, rudely fastened to the stems of young trees, sharpened at the end and driven into the earth, open on three sides, and affording a view of the whole camp, with the large fires still burning, at which sheep and oxen had been roasting entire. Nor were the consumers of the banquet much less uncivilized than their fare. Sprung from a common origin, and successors of the Goths, Visigoths, Vandals, and Suevi, who had poured for two or three centuries previously their living torrent over the countries of Europe, they were

now inflicting in their turn the same devastations on the Saxon inhabitants (now become the peaceable and undisputed possessors of the country) which the former had committed upon the unoffending Britons. Like all the barbarian tribes of the north of Europe, their strength and stature was almost gigantic, and their long flowing hair was cherished as a distinctive ornament, (it even continued to be a point of dispute between their Norman descendants after their conversion to Christianity and the clergy, so late as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries;) their defensive armour was laid aside, and their merriment was loud and boisterous, as they carved with their long sharp knives the half-roasted viands before them. Heaps of enormous loaves, and capacious vessels of liquor, were placed on one side under the charge of a cup-bearer, whose slight, pale, emaciated figure formed a strange contrast with the colossal war-

riors he waited upon, as well as with his own flushed cheek and unsteady step, which made it evident he had himself taken copious draughts of the beverages under his care.

Sigurd was loudly welcomed as he took the seat reserved for him near his brother Anlaf.

“ The fair Saxon will be our cupbearer,” said the Sea King, aloud, with an air of triumphant pleasure, as he looked round at the admiring countenances of his followers: but Edith stood pale and motionless, like a marble statue, scarcely conscious that all eyes were turned towards her.

“ And if the last could not keep his brains free of the liquor, this one seems to have neither life nor sense !” murmured one of the Danes.

“ We gain nothing except a pleasant sight for our eyes by having this new slave here instead of that drunken Gerthric !” observed another.

“ Silence !” said the deep voice of Sigurd, with a shade of displeasure in its tone; “ it is the daughter of the priest of Birdham ; she will be more cheerful ere a few suns have passed over ; let her be respected in the meantime as the intended bride of Sigurd.”

“ Beware, O King ! draw not near to the daughter of the stranger !” was pronounced by a hollow voice, close behind the brothers. Sigurd looked round, but the speaker had already mixed with the crowd, and there was no one visible from whom the sounds could have apparently proceeded, although something in the tone seemed not unfamiliar to his ear. It had, however, been heard but by few, and no notice further was taken of the occurrence.

The attention of Edith was presently aroused by the cupbearer Gerthric placing a large carved drinking horn in her hand, and filling it up with mead ; she looked round doubtfully for a moment.

Sigurd was holding out his hand, with a smile, to receive it : she dashed the cup and its contents hastily on the ground, then concealed her face with both hands.

Several of the Danes started up from their seats, but a sign from the hand of their leader checked them.

“ I thought not that the pale girl had such spirit in her,” called out Anlaf, with a smile, and, extending his arm, he drew Edith towards him, and placed her on his knee, and, in spite of her struggles, kissed her lips two or three times.

“ Brother Sigurd, this must be my bride : I give thee my share of the booty in exchange for her.”

Sigurd sprung to his legs on seeing the action ; and the workings of his features became frightful as he evidently laboured to restrain his passion. But scarcely did the words of Anlaf

reach his ear when the torrent of fury burst out, and his eyes, rolling under their contracted brows, seemed as if they actually emitted sparks of fire as he rushed towards his rival, who also sprung to his feet, throwing Edith from him, and stepping aside to avoid the headlong fury of his brother, inflicted a slight wound at the same moment on him with the knife he held in his hand.

Sigurd uttered a cry of rage at seeing his own blood, and the conflict would inevitably have cost the life of one or other, had not an individual started up from a dark corner among the crowd, and thrown himself between them. It was an old man, with matted beard, and hair which hung wildly about his features, clothed with a black drapery only from his waist downwards, the upper part of his person being entirely naked, except a belt, to which were fixed dried skins of serpents, and other fantastic

and repulsive objects, thrown over one shoulder. It was the wizard from Northumberland, whose voice had already been heard abruptly behind Sigurd, and whose glance seemed now to arrest and paralyze the unnatural strife between the brothers, which no other means could have effected. Anlaf cast down his eyes, and his arm dropped listlessly to his side; but the rage of Sigurd, though checked for an instant, was not to be so easily appeased. It seemed as if some demon had entered into and taken possession of him as he yelled aloud, and, grinding his teeth, rushed forth from the tent. All made way for his progress, as if a cannon ball had preceded him; yet one or two could not avoid being hurled to the ground by his arm as he passed, striking at everything around, in a state of temporary insanity.

As the chiefs of the Danes followed out of the tent where the feast had been so rudely interrupted, they saw their leader with headlong

speed issue from the shadow of the enormous yews, and, having crossed the beautiful open glade between them and the deep sides of the hill, dash up the precipitous ascent clothed with thickets of tall junipers and hollies. A young ash-tree stood before him ; he grasped it with both hands, and rocking his body to and fro, the roots soon gave way, when the stem and branches became a sort of club in the clutch of the Dane, with which he struck right and left, crushing the other trees near. Higher up, some yews of a larger size bent their boughs too near the ground to admit of his passage—they were quickly wrenched from the trunks, and hurled half way down the steep. At last, on reaching the summit, they saw the ferocious warrior sink exhausted to the ground, leaving behind him a track like the path of a hurricane.

As he might now be approached without danger, some of the Danes ascended by an easier route, and brought their chief down on a sort of

litter, now completely exhausted, bathed in perspiration, bleeding from the wound Anlaf had given him, with a slight foam on his lip, and nearly insensible.

Sigefert, Anlaf, and the other chiefs, gathered round in a circle as they laid their burden down at the feet of the Northumbrian Seer: for a long time the latter stood immovable, with his distended eyes fixed on the almost inanimate body before him. Such was the awe that this old man had inspired the rude Danes with, that no whisper broke the silence; till at last, tossing his head wildly back, with one arm extended, he spoke with an air of pretended inspiration.

“Chiefs of the Danes! warriors of the North! mighty deeds shall be done by the strong arm of Sigurd, and by you, his companions. You shall conquer and possess broad lands, and the fair heritage of the Saxon race shall be your own. But the gods must be first propitiated. Odin, the awful king of men, has looked upon me in

the visions of the night. His brow was red and wrathful. He spoke like the voice of the rolling tempests of Thor ; but the words must never be revealed to mortal ear. For seven years Alfred the Saxon has prevailed against us,—he who was once a fugitive, with no place to lay his head, while our mystic banner of the raven was borne in triumph,—he reigns in the land. Success will not again attend our arms unless the gods of our forefathers have their wrath appeased by solemn sacrifices.”

There was a pause : after some time, Sigefert, the commander of their vessels, spoke—

“ It is well said ! Let a swift war horse be immolated in the camp to-morrow in honour of the gods.” The rest bowed in assent as he looked round the circle.

The wizard frowned and shook his head. The Danes looked at him with apprehension.

“ There shall be no complaint of want of oxen and coursers for the sacrifice,” pursued Sigefert.

The old man fixed his eyes with a fearful mysterious expression on the other's face, as he added, in a lower tone—

“Have you not heard how the gods were honoured by our ancestors in the olden time with other and nobler victims?”

The Norsemen exchanged looks with each other: there was indeed an ancient and terrible custom which had fallen into disuse of later years: the dark glittering eyes of the old man were anxiously scrutinizing the gloomy ideas which now began to dawn upon their minds.

“Can it be that the will of the gods demands the Christian captives” asked Anlaf, in a hoarse whisper.

“Even so!” shouted the wizard priest, exultingly. “Thus it must be!”

And the chiefs dared not contradict or dispute with him.

CHAPTER VI.

..... “ Below appears
The dark’ning cloud of Saxon spears.”

ALMOST every danger, whatever its nature may be, begins to appear less formidable when once we have taken a firm resolution to exert ourselves to overcome it; and accordingly the terrors and apprehensions of the Saxon population who had taken refuge within the walls of the fortified Cissa Ceaster, as well as of its inhabitants, began to disperse in proportion as their preparations for active warfare advanced. By the wise regulations of King Alfred, a register of all the male population capable of bearing

arms was kept in every decennary or tithing by the proper officers, who now proceeded to summon the forces at their disposal through their districts. Most of them were already assembled, as we have already seen ; and the only task required was to arm and discipline those whose enthusiasm was already aroused for the cause. Messengers were nevertheless sent to collect all those who might be scattered in the fields and copsewood : one of these returning, passed by the hut of the old woman where the wounded pastor and his son were concealed, and, seeing Kenwulph in front of the dwelling, hastily entered it. Etelulph was now recovering, but the anguish of mind he had undergone for the last few days for the fate of his daughter had almost broken his spirit. A gleam of hope, however, shot through his mind as he learnt the state of affairs, and he allowed

himself to be conducted to the city, with the assistance of his son and the Saxon messenger.

The progress of the unfortunate priest was necessarily slow, and it was already late in the day when they arrived at the gates of the capital of the South Saxons. Just as they were within a few hundred yards of the walls, a crowd of armed men issued from the deep archways, as if to welcome them : the light of the setting sun flashed back from pikes and spears ; and a few priests, mixed with women and children, stood on the ramparts, invoking the blessings of Heaven on their arms. News had been brought of the place of encampment of the Danes, (confirmed by the smoke of their watchfires, which was distinctly visible from the city,) and the leaders of the little army of Saxons had determined to surprise the ferocious invaders by daybreak the next morning, advancing upon them after waiting through the night under

cover of the extensive woods, which stretched between the cultivated lands immediately surrounding the city and the open Downs where their enemies lay. As they commenced their march in this direction they passed close to Etelulph and his son. No sooner was the pastor recognised and his sufferings known, than enthusiasm spread through the ranks, more intense than before, if possible, for his virtues and sanctity were well known and respected. A faint glow came back to his pale features as his countrymen passed on with measured step, each saluting him; even the leaders checked their horses a moment, and made a gesture of respect on approaching the venerable priest. Nor was this beginning of their march silent: though no modern instruments of music were there to accompany them, the following stanzas were joined in by hundreds of masculine voices, and their regular march kept time to the measure:—

Arise ! sons of Ælla, arise to the battle !
Arise in defence of your altars and faith ;
Let it never be said that the Dane and the Norseman
Your homes and your country unpunished could scathe.

Arise ! take the falchion, the spear, and the helmet,
The cries of the victims your succour demand ;
Nor rest, till your arm has the ruthless invader
Expelled from the bounds of your dear fatherland.

The heathen has come in his pride and his fierceness ;
Unbridled and scoffing, despising all law ;
The smoke of the temple, the tears of the orphan,
Have claimed and have hallowed the sword that we draw.

Then manfully, boldly arouse to the battle,
And strike in defence of your altars and faith ;
Let it never be said that the Dane and the Norseman
Your homes and your country unpunished could scathe.

Kenwulph turned to his father with a face
glowing with excitement, and, as he earnestly
entreathed to be allowed to join in that expe-
dition, a sculptor would have found in the
group a noble and elevating subject for his art.
Etelulph answered not for some time, whilst
the animated looks of his son seemed as if they

would read what was passing in his mind : the boy was the last remaining prop which seemed left to him, and various emotions rapidly succeeded each other in that moment of suspense. The chorus was heard distinctly as the determined bands moved on : a few minutes longer, and it would be too late. Etelulph felt the noble ardour of his son ought not to be checked, and with a tremulous voice he bent forward and blessed him.

The boy seemed to have suddenly undergone the change to manhood, as he rose and sprung forward with a beating heart in the track of his armed fellow-countrymen ; but on overtaking them the leader shook his head at seeing the slight figure of the stripling before him.

“ His sister is a prisoner to the Danes,” whispered one of the nearest to the commander.

“ Enough !” returned the latter ; and Kenwulph marched on with the rest.

The sun went down slowly behind the broad ridge of Bow Hill, and the dews were already beginning to fall on the short turf, sprinkled here and there with the bright yellow cups of the wild cinquefoil, which clothes the extensive dell or glade between its base and the grove of yews already described. The declivities of the hill, clothed with graceful and picturesque trees and shrubs, shut out the external world on the remaining three sides, thus adding the feeling of complete seclusion to the natural romantic beauty of the place.

The Danish camp beyond was nearly deserted, and crowds had assembled under the shadow of those gloomy trees, whose blackness seemed deepening momentarily in the approaching twilight. No grass, no flowering herb grew under the shelter of the branches, and the deep-furrowed stems rose directly from the barren, dry earth. A rude altar of turf and stones was raised in the centre of the circle, by the side of

which stood the Northumbrian, with two or three assistants, half-naked, and wild-looking as himself. A sort of painful gloom weighed upon the assembled Danes, for, as the reader has already been informed, this portion of the race had been baptized and half instructed in the Christian religion by order of their humane conqueror, Alfred. Though on the first opportunity they had thrown off both their spiritual and temporal restraints, it was not without some vague and compunctionous apprehensions that they found themselves now, for the first time since their relapse, about to assist at some of the wildest and most dreadful rites of their ancient idolatry.

As the signal for commencing the ceremony seemed about to be given, a whispered inquiry circulated among the pirate chiefs concerning Sigurd, one of their kings. "He still sleeps, but his slumbers are heavy and unnatural," was the answer. "It is full twenty-four hours since

he received that sleeping draught from the hands of the priest."

But silence again reigned when the outer part of the circle opened to make way for the Christian prisoners, who were led two and two into the open space, blindfolded and bound. The eyes of Edith were the first from which the bandage was removed ; and as she looked round on the multitude of dark faces, and beheld the dreadful preparations, though her cheek was pale as marble, yet there was nothing in her look or demeanour that betrayed a shade of fear; her eye was calm and bright as she fixed it on the sanguinary pretender to supernatural powers, who avoided her glance. The Norsemen gazed with astonishment at the fortitude derived by that maiden from her reliance on the faith of the ancient martyrs.

At that critical moment the circle again gave way in sudden confusion, and the Sea King, Sigurd, stood in the centre with his falchion

grasped in his hand: each eye was cast down, as his look ranged from one to the other, and at last rested on the fearful knife.

“What means this preparation?” asked the chief.

No answer was returned to his questions, and he turned towards Edith, who now began to shrink and tremble as he unbound her hands: she had felt ready to meet death, but not to fall, once more, into the power of the blood-stained Norseman.

The old man, who had stood by the altar, now came forward to interfere, and repeated the harangue he had made before to the chiefs. A momentary pause ensued.

Sigurd looked sternly towards his brother Anlaf — “And wouldest thou, too, have seen this take place without interfering?”

Anlaf muttered some half-unintelligible words, to the effect that she would never belong to Sigurd, at least. The latter now seemed first to

remember the occurrences which had caused his frantic rage and subsequent lethargy.

“ False brother ! false sorcerer ? ” he cried, as his fierce passion seemed about to return, darting looks of angry contempt at both alternately, “ I know not what keeps my hand from taking vengeance on your accursed heads.”

The Danes pressed round them, anxious to prevent this renewal of strife and dissension ; but it is difficult to conjecture what might have been the consequences, had not several messengers arrived just at that crisis with news from their different outposts, which effectually arrested the attention of all.

It seemed that the march of the Saxon inhabitants had not been sufficiently guarded to escape the vigilant notice of the Danish sentries, who had discerned them from their elevated post, and watched their entrance into the covert of the woods at a mile’s distance south from the hill.

The captives were not, however, lost sight of in the busy and confused consultation that followed; carefully watched and guarded, they were reconducted to the tents; but this time Edith found herself, whether accidentally or not, consigned to the same place of confinement as Oswald and two or three others.

The night wore away heavily and gloomily, and its hours seemed interminable to the prisoners, who anxiously listened to every sound as the Danes hurried backwards and forwards occasionally. Midnight had passed over, and the various noises of the camp had nearly subsided into stillness, when the drapery of the tent was gently moved;—a pause—and it was lifted at the opposite side to the entrance; the moonlight was but just sufficient to distinguish the outline of a man's form, without discerning the features.

Edith grasped her lover's arm instinctively; and the latter called out—"Who art thou, that comest in darkness to —?"

"Hush! silence!—for your own sakes be still!" interrupted the voice of the intruder, in a hurried tone. "Your sentries are sleeping; beware of the least noise; I come as your friend,—but it will all depend on yourselves."

"And who shall assure us of that?"

"Is not the daughter of the Saxon pries—here?" asked the visitor.

"What if she is?" returned Oswald, with the suspicious tone of a man who but half comprehends what is passing. Instead of answering, the man took Edith's hand, and in another instant they were standing outside the tent on the fresh dewy turf. Edith looked round to the face of their new-found friend; his cheeks looked pale and ghastly in the cold moonlight, and his hands were trembling and unsteady: it is not surprising, as she had seen him but once, that

she did not recognise the cupbearer of the Danes.

They were about to question him, but Gerthric laid his finger on his mouth to enjoin silence, and pointed to the Danes slumbering within a few yards of them to enjoin silence; then, beckoning to them to follow, he glided, or rather crept, into the dark shadow of the tents, along whose line they cautiously proceeded for some time, till at length the darkness became so black, that, looking up from their crouching posture, they perceived they were under the branches of the gloomy yew trees.

“Where are you about to lead us?” cried Edith, with a start.

“I follow no further till we know our guide!” added Oswald, doggedly.

“Is it not enough that I mean you no harm?” asked the former, in a low tone of reproach; “another word, and I leave you to your fate.”

They resumed their progress, and in a short

time reached an open space surrounded by high thorns and a few hollies ; the broad Down lay before them. Their conductor paused. "The moonlight is too clear as yet," said he ; "we must wait for a time till the shadow of the hill falls across to allow you to leave these bushes without being seen by the sentries. Your Saxon army is there,—under those woods," continued he, pointing to the dark masses of forest in the distance.

"But you—you yourself?" asked Edith ; "when our tent is found vacant, how will you meet the fury and anger of —— of ——" she would not say Sigurd.

"Of the chiefs, thou wouldest say?" returned Gerthric. "It is no matter, if *you* are in safety ; my fate concerns none but myself."

"Now, after setting us free, wilt thou then go back to have thy brains beaten out by those heathen robbers?" cried Oswald, with unfeigned astonishment and regret.

The cupbearer smiled ; but there was something bitter and terrible in the expression, that chilled the Saxons without knowing exactly why ; it might be the effect of the moonlight on his emaciated countenance. There was a momentary silence.

A slight rustling was heard among the branches ; all started, and Edith half suppressed an exclamation ; the bushes were examined carefully and timidly, but nothing could be seen.

“ It was nothing but the night wind,” said Oswald.

The cupbearer seemed to feel the want of his accustomed stimulus, for he produced a leathern bottle from under his dress, and, having first offered it in vain to Edith and Oswald, drained its contents, with his hand still tremulous.

The pastor’s daughter could not help feeling some compassion for him, and proposed, in a gentle tone, that he should come with them to the Saxon camp. “ If thou art unhappy, as I see

thou art ill in health," she added, with a sigh, " we have holy men among us skilled in ministering to both mind and body, devoting themselves to no other office."

Her words seemed to strike a painful chord ; Gerthric clenched his hands convulsively, and his features became more deathlike than before.

" No," he exclaimed, after a little time, " no, that cannot be ! I must not, I dare not, think of it—even if the hours of my life were not numbered, as I feel they are—I feel it will not be long ;" and he again exhibited his fearful smile of despair.

Edith shuddered.

" Oh, for the sake of everything that—— for thine own sake, speak not so darkly ; there may yet be life and comfort."

" Never !" he said, " there never can for me. Listen, and judge.

" I am of Saxon birth, nurtured in the faith of you Christians, under those holy men you spoke

of; and well would it have been for me had I never left the retreat of those recluses and the shrine before which I served with them. My tale is one which would fill you with horror: better that it should be concealed in the everlasting darkness of the grave. It is enough to know I am a priest—twice a convert, and twice a renegade. The influence of an evil power has been upon me since my birth; it is in vain to struggle against fate's control. Enough! there is something within which tells me my course is nearly at an end; but *you* may still be happy. You are lovers!" he suddenly said, changing his tone, as he fixed his eye on Oswald and Edith.

The latter coloured, while Oswald answered, "We are betrothed, and our marriage—"

"I will not speak a blessing," interrupted Gerthric, "it would become a curse from my lips. But now the moon is sinking fast, and you may proceed safely. There is your path, and delay

not, for in another hour the dawn will begin to break, and it may then be too late."

Edith was about to answer, when the sudden gleam of a long-bladed knife caught her eye: a wild figure had sprung from among the brushwood, and in another second it was plunged up to the hilt in the heart of the unfortunate Gerthric.

It was the Northumbrian sorcerer, who now sprang to his feet and shouted aloud, brandishing his bloody weapon.

Oswald threw himself upon the assassin, and grasped him by the throat; a struggle ensued, and in another minute or two Sigurd and a number of Danes had arrived at the spot and surrounded them; the Saxons were again captives, but the murderer was already a corpse by the side of his victim.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Fatal chuser of the slaughter,
O'er you hovers Odin's daughter.”

GRAY'S ODES.

As soon as the eastern part of the sky was sufficiently light to distinguish the tracery of the foliage of the trees which stood up against it, and the form of the vast hills before them became discernible, the Saxons began to move in close and serried ranks through the glades of the forest; rousing the hare from her form, and startling the wood-pigeons from the tall beeches.

By the time the sun rose over the Downs, his first beams were reflected from the confused

motions of pikes and javelins of a multitude engaged in deadly strife. The Danes had not waited to be attacked ; they were prepared for the onset ; and as they saw the compact masses of their adversaries moving steadily on towards their tents in the grey morning light, they rushed forth with an impetuosity which nothing seemed capable of resisting, shouting their barbarous war cries. But the Saxon ranks stood firm and impenetrable ; the front rank knelt to receive them, with each a sharp-pointed stake planted by his side, newly cut from the forest, thus presenting an impassable *chevaux de frise* in their front : Anlaf and Sigurd, who charged side by side in the van of the Norsemen, had each a horse rendered useless before they discovered the nature of the obstacle they met with.

The battle was long and bloody : three several times the Danes were driven back upon the yew

grove and the side of the hills in their rear, and three several times the shouts and desperate energy of the two Sea Kings rallied them, and, falling upon the Saxon forces, the tide of battle rolled back over the plain of turf like a flooded river which covers the meadows, and after its retreat leaves the ground slippery and strewn with fragments and other marks of devastation.

Midday had passed, and still the contest was continued with determined obstinacy on both sides. The invaders had the advantage of being more experienced in battle, as well as the knowledge that there was no alternative for them but to conquer or be exterminated; and this is a feeling which urges men on to desperate actions of valour. On the other hand, the Saxons were slightly superior in numbers, and they fought for their homes and families.

The ranks began to be thinned visibly on each

side, and the struggle seemed to concentrate itself in the dell or glade we have before described ; and many a wild flower on that elastic turf was died crimson in the blood of the combatants. Sigurd's tall figure was conspicuous in the midst of the fray, and his powerful voice was heard above the tumult, encouraging and urging on his men ;—for the moment was critical ; the steep hill-side rose behind them, and there was no retreat. The Saxons were giving way once more before the terrific blows of his ponderous mace, which levelled an adversary at every stroke, when suddenly an arrow, from some unseen quarter, pierced his bare neck, and a stream of blood followed ; at the same moment the combatants in the front opposed to him made a rush, and the gigantic Dane fell to the earth, like a vast tree uprooted by the tempest.

A cry of despair rose from the Norsemen at seeing the destruction of their leader, which was

answered by an exulting shout from the Saxons, who immediately pushed on to follow up their advantage. Anlaf came up from a distance on seeing his brother sink in the conflict, and exerted himself to rally their followers; but the spirits of the Danes had already begun to fail, and the victory seemed no longer doubtful for the other party. The fatal words began to be repeated on all sides among the invaders, “To the ships ! to the ships !”

During the course of the battle, the daughter of Etelulph and the other captives were left bound at a few tents, forming an out-post half way up, or rather nearer the summit of the hill, from which they could see the whole battle-field, and watch the different variations of fortune, as success seemed to incline to one side or the other.

Their Danish guard had left them, excited by the sight, to join his countrymen in the strife

below ; and as they watched the progress of the day, Oswald's impatience at being forced to remain merely a spectator became uncontrollable. Edith could only shut her eyes to avoid the sight of carnage, and prayed inwardly and fervently.

A considerable number of the Danes now began to ascend the hill in different directions to avoid their pursuers, when suddenly twenty or thirty of their cavalry drew up in their flight close to the prisoners ; two or three sprung to the ground and seized Edith, in spite of her struggles and screams, placing her before one of their number on his horse. It was Anlaf, who now, without deigning to notice the frantic exertions of Oswald, who thus saw his bride carried off before his eyes, pushed on with the greatest speed that his horse was able to exert, over the crest of the hill, westward. The young Saxon rolled himself on the ground, shouted,

and exerted all his strength to burst the cords which bound him,—but in vain, and the knots only cut deeper into his arms from his efforts to disengage himself.

Although the horses which the Danes rode were far from fresh, having been engaged in battle since dawn, yet, as most of their Saxon pursuers were on foot, they could not easily overtake the little troop which surrounded Anlaf, and the latter gained accordingly the south-western brow of the hill, without danger of being impeded by the conquerors. It was a beautiful landscape which the eye of the Sea King ranged over; but the object which most pleased his sight was the winding shores of the sea, where his vessels lay conspicuous, with their white sails, some three or four miles below him. These once reached, he was safe from any foe, and accordingly he urged his horse down the declivity, (where only a large ash or two had

found space for their roots over and through the short furze and juniper bushes,) supporting the animal he rode with the bridle in one powerful hand, and bearing the now insensible weight of Edith up with the other,—for the occurrences of the last forty-eight hours had exhausted her, and she lay helpless on the saddle before him.

At that moment the advanced guard of another army began to appear winding along the valley at the foot of the hill, while the main body and the rear were still defiling from among the beech woods which stretch in that direction to the borders of Hampshire. As the Danes became aware of the new danger which threatened them Anlaf, only increased the speed with which he descended the slope, and his countenance became more sternly resolute than ever. There was a considerable quantity of coppice and woodland, at intervals, in the country that lay between him and the ships:

once screened from sight of the newly-arrived forces, all might yet succeed in his flight. But the fugitives had already been seen by the vanguard, and some troops instantly detached themselves, and advanced rapidly along the bottom to intercept the Danish chief in his course.

They encountered at the base of the hill. Anlaf called to his men to surround him, and to rush down on their opponents with the utmost violence in their power, in order to break through and escape, if possible. They obeyed ; and, placing himself in the centre, the desperate rush was made, as Anlaf shouted his Scandinavian war-cry.

But it was in vain : the horse he rode, already urged to the limits of his powers, stumbled under his double burthen in the rough ground, and fell forwards. The Sea King sprung up uninjured, and prepared himself for the last

desperate struggle on foot, as their enemies closed round the little remaining band of Norsemen.

Their defence was such as is only made by desperate men. Already the assailants began to draw back from the blows Anlaf dealt round in the fierceness of despair, like a wild beast brought to bay by the hunters, when a young soldier on foot, having outstripped the advancing forces from the westward, joined the combatants, and, drawing his short two-edged sword, penetrated into the thickest of the strife.

The Danish chief had placed himself with his back to the stem of a tall solitary ash tree, at whose foot lay the helpless daughter of Etelulph, surrounded by the savage warriors of the north, when the young soldier, with a sudden spring, closed with his gigantic adversary, whose ponderous mace thus became useless for the moment, then, shortening his grasp of the sword,

plunged it repeatedly up to the hilt in the body of the Dane, who wore no defensive armour, and both rolled to the ground together in the deadly struggle.

“Slay them not!—slay not, but take prisoners alive!” cried out a chief, in chain armour of steel, followed by a second reinforcement, as he rode up in haste, with a tone of authority; “such are the commands of the king.”

The Danes looked despondingly at the fallen body of their leader, then at each other, and finally laid down their arms.

“How is this, young man?” said the Earl of Mercia to the young soldier. “What means this breach of military discipline, in quitting your division and allotted place without orders?—and a woman here?”

Osic had just disengaged himself from the weight of the enormous Dane, and was raising Edith from the ground, as the reproof of Ethel-

red reached him. He stood with some embarrassment before his commander; but in a moment the voices of the rest began to plead his excuse, for which the view of the slaughtered Sea King, with his golden collar, afforded ample grounds.

The Earl of Mercia was, however, too strict a disciplinarian to make any remark, and accordingly ordered the body of Anlaf to be thrown across one of the horses, and all proceeded, at a somewhat slower pace, upwards to the summit of the hill, where the centre of the army seemed about to make a halt.

King Alfred was seated on his charger, as they arrived, on a spot which commanded a view of the whole scene of the late victory, and of the tract of country which the invaders had laid waste previously. The Downs at the foot of

the hill were strewn with dead bodies of men and horses, while numerous parties were scattered over the country in pursuit of the remains of the Danish forces, now in full retreat to their vessels. The rout was complete. A shout announced the triumphant approach of the Earl of Mercia, and Alfred contemplated the vast limbs and fierce countenance of the Danish champion with some astonishment, as he listened to the account his brother-in-law gave him of the concluding skirmish. Osric and Edith stood near, with looks cast down, in the presence of their sovereign: when the narration was finished, Alfred looked from one to the other, with a slight smile, and addressed the young Saxon.

“Thou hast begun thy military life with a breach of discipline, young man; we must, however, excuse it for once, on consideration of the cause and the consequences, provided it is not

likely to occur again." These last words were spoken with a significant glance at the daughter of the priest, who looked down with a sigh. At this moment, Oswald, who had been released by some charitable hand from his untoward restraint, and had been eagerly hurrying backwards and forwards in search of his betrothed, pushed himself through the bystanders to the King's presence.

But need we further detail the recognition and greeting of the brothers, and the benevolent interest which the monarch took in their story, as he listened to the contest of generosity between the two sons of Ceowald, each insisting on resigning his claim to the hand of Edith in favour of the other? The Earl of Mercia cut the dispute short. "Let the girl herself decide to-morrow about it," he cried, "for see, my Liege, if I am not mistaken, they are bringing hither something of more importance than all

this sickly love trash, which only serves to spoil and unman a soldier."

The King turned as he spoke, and, in fact, a small party of Saxons were ascending the slope, bearing between them the body of Sigurd, part of the arrow still remaining in his neck, with two or three Danish prisoners following, with looks of morose and unwilling submission. The bodies of the two Sea Kings were laid side by side on the turf in front of Alfred's horse.

After some time, the King inquired how the other pirate chief had fallen,—but none could answer his question; but the shaft of the arrow was drawn forth, in order to be hereafter identified, that the rewards decreed by Alfred's munificence might be delivered to the lucky owner of the arrow.

"And now, let their bodies be interred here, on this spot," pursued the monarch,—“here, in sight of the scenes of their violence and their

well-merited deaths ; and let high mounds be raised according to the customs of their countrymen, over the graves, which shall remain as a perpetual memorial to future ages of the repulse of the invaders by my brave South-Saxon subjects."

It would be tedious to describe the joyful acclamations which greeted the much-loved King as he entered the gates of the city in triumph ; how the streets were strewn with rushes, and the houses decorated with green branches and wreaths of flowers, while the air rung with shouts of exultation ; or how Alfred became yet more dear to his people as he turned aside, with a sigh and a tear, on beholding some of those whose nearest and dearest friends had perished, standing mournfully apart from the general joyous crowd. We must also leave to our readers to imagine the pious delight and gratitude to heaven of the venerable Etelulph, as he

once more found collected around him, and un-hurt, all the individuals who formed the family group in which we first introduced him to their notice.

Two or three days afterwards, Etelulph received, with no little surprise, a summons to the presence of his sovereign, whom he found seated in a hall, whose rich tessellated pavement, though now partly misplaced and injured, bore testimony to the taste and magnificence of its former Roman masters.* Several of the chiefs of the army, and the wise statesmen, who enjoyed the confidence of their sovereign, were there, and one or two of the ecclesiastical order mixed here and there with the assemblage.

The wondering priest advanced with an obeisance to a table where the King sat, on which lay several books, and among them, to his grati-

* Roman tessellated pavements have been more than once discovered in Chichester and its vicinity.

fication, he recognised the copy of the Scriptures which formed his chief treasure. Alfred saw by the direction his eyes took that it had attracted his attention, and, opening the book, inquired if Etelulph was able to read and explain a part he pointed out to him. The latter obeyed, and gave ready replies to all the questions put to him, though mentally perplexed as to what all this was to end in.

“ When I first wore the crown,” said Alfred, turning to the assemblage, “ there were not two persons south of the Humber who could read or comprehend the Latin service, much less answer such questions as you have heard this parish priest reply to. How think you, my Lords, is he not worthy ?”

Their assent was signified by an universal inclination of the head.

The amazed pastor was next ordered to kneel, while Alfred proceeded to place the signet ring

of the deceased Wechtune on his finger, and to deliver the pastoral staff into his hand, as successor to that prelate.

“ And now, my Lord Bishop,” continued the King, with a smile, “ we have a request to make of you ; your son here has been discovered to be the individual entitled to the reward for the death of Sigurd ; he will accept of nothing but the place of a page near our royal person ; will you give him to me for that purpose ?”

Kenwulph, who had hitherto been an unobserved, though far from an uninterested, spectator of the scene which was passing, came forward, and earnestly pressed his father to consent, who gave it, at length, with some reluctance at the separation from his spirited boy, who afterwards rose high in the confidence and esteem of his royal master.

Before Alfred left the metropolis of the South Saxons, the nuptials of Oswald and Edith were

celebrated in his presence by the new prelat~~—~~ ; and we are enabled to state, for the information of such of our fair readers as may feel any interest in the fact, that Edith was given away by Alfred himself, and received a suitable dowry from the royal coffers ; nor had she reason afterwards to regret her choice, for Oswald became one of the most attentive and complaisant of husbands.

Of Osric we have little to relate, except that, during the reign of Edward the Elder, he distinguished himself in the constant wars which were renewed and kept up with the Danes after Alfred's death,—and, faithful to his determination that his efforts through life were employed on that one patriotic object,—and that his death was glorious and honourable, on the field of battle, at Derby, at the moment of a great and signal victory over the Danes.

N O T E S.

Page 71.

The chivalrous and generous treatment of the wife and sons of the Dane, by King Alfred, is historical, and affords too striking an illustration of that monarch's character to be passed over unnoticed. The words of Holinshed are these:—

“ In the meane time came Hasting, with eighty ships, into the Thames, and builded a castle at Middleton; but he was constrained by siege, which King Alfred planted about him, to receive (take) an oth, that he should not in any wise annoie the dominion of King Alfred, who, upon his promise to depart, gave great gifts as well to him as to his wife and children. One of his sonnes also King Alfred held at the fontstone, and to the other Duke Aldred was godfather. For (as it were to win credit, and to avoid present danger) Hasting sent unto Alfred these his two sonnes, signifieing that if it stood with his pleasure, he could be content that they should be baptised. But, neverthelesse, this Hasting was ever most untrue of word and deed; he

builded a castle at Beamfield. And as he was going forth to spoile and wast the King's countries, Alfred tooke that castle with his wife, children, ships, and goods, which he got together of such spoiles as he had abroad; but be restored unto Hasting his wife and children, because he was their godfather.

“This enterprise was atchived by Etheldred, Duke of Mercia, in the absence of the King, as Matth. Westmonast. hath noted.”

King Alfred frequently resided at Winchester, and was buried in the cathedral there. For the gratification of such as may think it matter of curiosity, the “epitaph in Latine, made in memorie of him by a certeine learned clarke,” is subjoined, with Abraham Fleming’s translation of it—

Nobilitas innata tibi probitatis honorem,
Armpotens Alfrede, dedit, probitas que laborem,
Perpetuum que labor nomen, cui mixta dolori
Gaudia semper erant, spes semper mixta timori.
Si modo victor eras, ad crastina bella pavebas
Si modo victus eras, in crastina bella parabas,
Cui vestes sudore jugi, cui sica cruento
Tincta jugi, quantum sit onus regnare probarent.
Non fuit immensi quisquam per chinata mundi
Cui tot in adversis vel respirare liceret
Nec tamen aut ferro contritus ponere ferrum
Aut gladio potuit vite finisse labores.
Jam post transactos regni viteque labores,
Christus ei sit vera quies sceptrumque perenne.

Nobilitie by birth to thee (O Alfred ! strong in arms)
Of goodness bathe the honour given, and honour toilsome
harmes,
And toilsome harmes, an endless name, whose joies
were alwaies mixt
With sorrow, and whose hope with feare was evermore
perplexed.
If this day thou wert conqueror, the next daies war thou
dredst ;
If this day thou wert conquered, to next daies war thou
spedst ;
Whose clothing wet with dailie swet, whose blade with
bloudie staine,
Did prove how great a burthen 'tis in roialtie to raigne.
There hath not been in anie part of all the world so wide,
One that was able breath to take and troubles such abide ;
And yet with weapons wearie would not weapons lay aside,
Or with the sword the toilesomnesse of life by death divide,
Now, after labours past of realme and life which he did
spend,
Christ be to him rue quietnesse and scepter void of end.

Page 99.

Fury of Sigurd.

The champions of the North were called Berserker in
the old tongue, from ber, bare, and serker, a garment ; be-
cause they wore no armour in battle. They are described

by almost all the northern writers as men of extraordinary stature and force, subject to sudden and violent attacks of passion, under the influence of which their fury was ungovernable, and as formidable to their natural friends as to their enemies. At such times, their bodily strength was almost supernatural, and they would vent their rage even upon inanimate objects, till they sunk down sick and weak with exhaustion, after the most prodigious exertions. They were supposed by the first Christians in the north to be possessed by devils, and baptism was esteemed to be a cure for this species of ferocious madness. Certain it is, that after the introduction of Christianity, the manners of the north began to assume a milder character, and the same tone of mind which could incline a heathen warrior to receive baptism, would at the same time enable him to repress such ungovernable paroxysms of temper.—(Notes to Herbert's *Helga*, a Poem, in six cantos. 1815.)

Page 103.

The Northumbrian Wizard.

Among the Tartar and Mongul tribes in the uncivilized parts of Asia, the men who exercise the office of ministers of religion appear to be always pretenders to the arts of magic and incantations at this day. In the northern and more remote parts of Scandinavia, the belief in supernatural powers being vested in their sorcerers or conjurors remained for centuries; indeed, among all barbarous and savage na-

tions, the only notions they have of a deity are constantly mixed up with dark, superstitious ideas of magic, charms, and spells, through which terror is inculcated into their minds.

Page 138.

The glade, or "*hollow*" (to use an Americanism), which tradition points out as the scene of the sanguinary contest described, has acquired the name of Kingley Bottom, evidently derived from the Saxon word, King's "*lich*," the same as the German *leiche*, a corpse. The mounds, or barrows, which surmount the declivity, have also retained the name of the King's tombs, and are distinctly visible from the city of Chichester in clear weather. They were originally in the oval form, like a keel of a ship, which designates the burial-places of the Danish Sea Kings, but have evidently been opened more than once, without any discoveries of interest, as far as the writer could learn.

In misty, stormy weather, the admirers of Ossian (if any such still exist in these march of intellect times) may fancy they see the dark faces of the heathen warriors "*bending from the gray cloud*," and lamenting the desecration of their last resting-place. A modern fantastic affectation of refinement has induced some persons of late to attempt to alter the name of Kingley Bottom to that of Kingley *Vale*, but it is better known, and more correctly described, by the former word, as it is not a valley, but a hollow in the sides of the hill.

Page 140.

The investiture of newly-chosen bishops with the ring and staff was an undoubted royal privilege till the eleventh century, when the ambitious designs of that firebrand Pope Gregory VII. threw a great part of Europe, and especially Germany and Italy, into wars and confusion, whilst he struggled to establish the complete independence of the sacerdotal power, and ultimately the supremacy of the papal see over the crown and sceptre of temporal princes.

SIR WALTER TYRREL.

A NORMAN STORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE COURT.

“ Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
That greater was there none under the sonne ;
Full many a riche contree had he wonne,
What with his wisdom and his chevalrie—
* * * * *
And on the morrow, when the day gan spring,
Of horse and harneis noise and clattering
There was in the hostelries all about,
And to the paleis rode there many a route
Of lordes, upon stedes and palfrees.”

CHAUCER'S KNIGHT'S TALE.

ON the south side of Westminster Bridge, the eye of the spectator now rests on masses of blackened and shapeless ruins, where the houses of Lords and Commons recently stood. Close

to these, the solid and ancient stonework of Westminster Hall, having braved the dangers of fire in 1834, seems as if it would still resist the chances and changes of future centuries; the precision and beauty of its masonry, and the noble sublimity of its majestic design, bid fair to remain as a mark for the imitation and admiration of posterity.

In the year 1100, however, it formed a newly-built addition to the Palace of Westminster (itself then but recently completed); the scaffolding was still remaining within and without the walls, and crowds of dusty workmen mixed among the soldiery and retainers of a court, one of the most powerful and splendid in Europe. No bridge at that time existed over the river, whose surface was animated by numbers of boats plying between Lambeth and the villages on the Westminster side. A scene of more than usual vivacity was observable on a charming

summer morning, in July of the first year of the twelfth century. A long train of boats, with brilliant-coloured streamers, advanced rapidly up the Thames, impelled by the vigorous arms of their rowers, whose oars made the water sparkle like silver embroidery under the summer's sun.

On arriving opposite the palace, the shore was found lined with idlers; and the officers of the royal household, with the King's watermen in state-liveries, stood ready to receive the persons whose arrival was expected. Planks were in readiness to pass from the boats to the firm ground; fresh rushes were laid all round the landing-place, as a precaution against mud; for the individuals whose convenience was thus consulted were of no less diplomatic importance and dignity than the envoys of William IX., Count of Poictou, and Duke of Guienne.

On stepping from their boats, they passed

between two long lines of bowmen, in leatheren coats of great thickness, intended to be proof against arrows, the chief missiles of offensive warfare at that time. Few of these men were under six feet in height, and all wore the silver badge of the Norman monarch on their left arms and in front of their caps. Their independent soldierlike appearance, both attractive and gratifying to the eye of a military man, did not pass unnoticed by the envoys, though more than one were ecclesiastics.

They were received at the great gates by the major-domo, or seneschal, in his velvet gown, with gold chain and white staff, surrounded by numerous knights and esquires, to accompany them to the King's presence. As soon as the audience was over, they were again conducted, by a number of the Norman barons and nobles, to the place of embarkation, on their return to the residence of the Bishop of London, who

was about to entertain them with magnificent hospitality.

The departure of the embassy was watched in silence by two persons, from a window which commanded a view of the river as well as the courts of the palace. One of them, a man of about thirty-five or forty, rather under than above the ordinary height, was dressed in a long tunic, reaching to the ancles, of the finest cloth, manufactured in the Flemish looms ; his boots, of crimson morocco leather, exhibited the absurd and preposterous fashion, (which afterwards reached a still greater excess,) having their points at least six inches longer than the feet. His short mantle,—which much resembled the modern Hussar cloak in its perfect uselessness, excepting as a mere vehicle for ornament,—was of the richest materials, and lined with the most rare and expensive furs that could be procured. His beard was closely shaved, except a mous-

tache on the upper lip, which, as well as his hair, was of a heavy and rather disagreeable tinge of a sandy colour. This did not, however, at all obscure the forcible and intellectual expression of his countenance as he stood, with compressed lips, on which a slight sneer was perceptible, watching the embarkation of the envoys with his clear and piercing grey eyes. The individual on whose shoulder he was familiarly leaning was about ten years younger, dressed in a similar manner, but presenting a strong contrast to the first in his clear olive complexion and black clustering hair. The small size and delicate form of their hands and feet shewed that both were of noble Norman descent. A perfect silence reigned for some minutes.

“ And so good day to the learned, reverend, and sagacious envoys of the gallant Count of Guienne and Poictou !” said the elder of the two

persons described. “The bargain is struck, Wat, and all that remains is, to send a few hundreds of men at arms to escort the money and take possession of those rich provinces. Mort de ma vie ! what an egregious ass is this ! He goes to get his brains beat out (if he has any) by the Saracens ; or if, by the usual luck of fools, he comes back safe and sound, why then William of Bordeaux may go whistle for his fair cities and pleasant forests again.”

The other laughed and nodded.

“ True, true ; but they fight for something more refined than lands or castles. Your Grace knows that the monk of Cisteaux has promised the crusaders a double share of territory in the next world for any they may lose here below in consequence.”

“ That crazy friar ought to be muzzled,” was the rejoinder ; “ all the world goes mad as soon as he bites them. I believe I ought to thank

him though ; for between fools and madmen, I make it all turn to my own profit."

" St. Hubert has preserved *us* hitherto from the infection," observed his companion.

" Saint or sinner, no matter," replied the King, " though that Hubert is the only one of the holy multitude I ever could abide. How slowly those rascals of workmen get on with my Hall there ! We must bring a fresh troop of labourers from Guienne. 'Twill be a noble pile, when once finished, Tyrrel !"

The latter assented, saying it was an undertaking worthy of the builder of the new and magnificent work of London Bridge ; and the vast edifice of the Tower.

" Yes," continued Rufus, " England shall have reason to boast, in future times, of these monuments of the reign of the second William ; they will say I was the only prince who kept his senses in these mad times. Normandy is my

own ; Artois is mine ; Guienne and Poictou will be from henceforth under my sway—and who knows what further power I may not add to my English sceptre. When my nobles and vassals meet to carouse under yon lofty roof, they shall say, never was king of England so lodged before, or so powerful a monarch. And ere long, I will hold a solemn festival in that stately Hall ; and such shall be the greetings at my royal banquet.”

As he looked with triumphant pride full in his friend’s face, they both heard distinctly pronounced the monosyllable, “ No !” Each started and looked round. They were themselves the only visible tenants of the apartment. The King, placing his finger on his lips to enjoin silence, drew his dagger, and motioned to Tyrrel to imitate him. They then made the circuit of the room in opposite directions, striking their sharp pointed blades into the hangings as they went

on. There was nothing, however, behind, which encountered the points, but the solid wall. They sheathed their weapons as they again faced each other at the spot where they had commenced the search. Each looked with astonishment in the other's face for a few seconds. Tyrrel turned deadly pale, and made the sign of the cross.

The King laid both hands on his favourite's shoulders, and burst into a loud laugh, which rang strangely under the vaulted roof.

“ Why, Tyrrel ! Wat Tyrrel ! what sight have ye seen, man ? We must shave your head and turn you into a monk if your nerves are no stronger.”

The knight's countenance became crimson. “ Give me an enemy that I can see and meet face to face, my Liege ; and see if Walter Tyrrel will turn his back to living man.”

William shook his companion's hand with a

friendly pressure. “ Well then, look into the next chamber, and see who is this bold eaves-dropper.

Tyrrel eagerly hastened to fulfil this order, but the room was perfectly solitary ; he looked out from it into the gallery, where there stood two or three yeomen of the guard ; but in answer to his questions they positively denied that any person had passed in or out since the departure of the embassy from Guienne. He returned accordingly, with an ill-dissembled uneasiness on his features, to the King, who treated the matter with great apparent indifference ; but ordered the clerk of the works to be summoned immediately to his presence.

A little old, withered, and shrivelled man quickly made his appearance in the apartment, with a profusion of bows and cringings, that increased his natural stoop to the extent of making him seem nearly bent double. He had

been formerly an Italian monk, and having fled from his convent for some irregularity, of which he feared the punishment, had found a patron and defender in William, whose splendid designs gave him full scope for the exercise of his architectural talents.

“ How soon think you to finish the Hall ? ” were the first words the King uttered on his entrance.

“ Ah, ah, Santa Madre ! how can I answer that ? ” But seeing a frown gathering on Rufus’ brow, he continued, “ I crave your Grace’s pardon ! but it will take one, two, perhaps three months, most illustrious ! ”

“ Three months ! ” cried the King ; “ by the face of St. Luke,* I will have it ready to feast in ere three weeks are over ! Take as many men, as much gold as thou wilt, but I must have my Hall completed.”

* This was the customary oath of William Rufus.

“ It is impossible, most excellent prince ! But my Lord’s commands will hasten my works ; I dare not promise that it can be ready for the feast sooner than our Lady’s day in September.”

“ Tut, tut ! I know thou canst make it ready by the Lady day of August—canst not ?” The obsequious little clerk bowed. “ Right,” continued Rufus, “ so let it be then. We will hold a cour plnière on the occasion, and summon all our nobles and barons for that day. And now let us see who will gainsay me !” Tyrrel listened anxiously, almost fearing to hear another sound of the voice—but all was still. The king glanced his eye on him and smiled.

“ What sayest thou, Tyrrel, to an expedition into the New Forest to pass away time in the meanwhile ? the venison will be now just in season, and my brother Henry shall join us at Winchester.”

Tyrrel was delighted at the proposal, for he

loved (like his King) the green forest and the merry sound of the horn better than the stately halls and the music of the royal feastings. The expedition was accordingly resolved on ; and for the next forty-eight hours the whole court was in a bustle of preparation and anticipation of sport.

Sir Walter Tyrrel, whom we have introduced to the notice of the reader as the familiar friend and companion of Rufus, was at this time in the flower of his age, and highly distinguished for the beauty of his person as well as his remarkable skill in all manly exercises. A cheerful, open-hearted disposition, while it made him a general favourite with all those who became acquainted with him, had principally conduced to the favour in which he was held by the King. But there was still a wide difference in their characters in other respects. Rufus was, as it is well known,

of a haughty, passionate disposition, though he was perhaps on that very account the better fitted to control and overawe the turbulent barons who, yielding him, with a kind of sulky deference, the submission and services required by the feudal system, still were very apt to consider themselves as so many sovereign princes in their own district, and the equals of their monarch in all but the title. The prudent and energetic policy he pursued throughout his reign shews him to have been particularly qualified for a sovereign in those times when the royal power ran great risk of being subverted by the encroachments of the aristocratic part of the Norman feudal institutions, (which in fact nearly happened in France at one period of the middle ages.) The character of Rufus has been much misrepresented by the monkish annalists, as we may fairly suspect; his vigorous intellect pierced through the mists of superstition with

which the church of Rome had already obscured the Christian faith, and he perceived that the arts of the wily priesthood were solely directed to their own aggrandisement. Even in a merely temporal point of view, he failed not to see the encroaching and palpable strides which the papal court was making towards universal domination. No wonder, then, that he should have despised their persons, and opposed their system even in self-defence, while it follows, as a matter of course, that he thereby drew upon himself the reproach of atheism and irreligion from the spiteful monks, who were then the only chroniclers. But the absence of all meanness and deceit in his character was what principally formed the bond of union between him and Tyrrel, whose father was one of the few Normans who remained behind in their own territory, after the Conqueror had taken possession of the English crown: subsequently, the prevailing mania

for joining the crusades having taken a firm hold of his mind, he had left his son Walter behind as a page attached to the court of William when he resided, as he occasionally did, in Normandy. As the young man grew up he became attached to Rufus, and when that prince succeeded to the crown of England, Tyrrel left his small paternal estate in Picardy, and became a part of the retinue of the new King. The sports of the field and wood were at that time the chief, indeed almost the only, amusement and pursuit of the nobles when not engaged in war ; and Tyrrel, being educated in Normandy, where the *science* (as it was termed in those days) was carried to its highest perfection, had himself become no slight adept in the mysteries of woodcraft. He was a bold, graceful, and well-practised rider ; no one knew the different “mots” on the horn, appropriated for the various occurrences of the chace, better, or could sound them with a

clearer, steadier breath than Sir Walter, and he had also no slight skill in the “*gai science*” of minstrelsy, which became so fashionable afterwards in Provence, the land of the Troubadours. Falconry, also, one of the most universally pursued sports of his day, he was completely master of; (and those who have themselves ever tried the difficult art of “*reclaiming*” a wild bird, know that it requires no ordinary share of patience, temper, and good judgment, to be successful.) No man was better qualified to be the favourite of a prince; and if Tyrrel shut his eyes at times to the defects in his royal master’s character, while he admired his great qualities and abilities for governing, we must not blame him too much for what others have done frequently, both before and since, without having the open frankness to tell their prince of his faults, as Sir Walter did, and the King allowed him to do, without being offended at his temerity.

But by a circumstance that occurred a day or two after the scene which we have described, the friendship of Tyrrel for his sovereign was doomed to be put to a severe trial.

As William and his favourite were riding by the banks of the Thames, with but a few companions, returning from hawking, they saw a covered litter, such as were used by females of rank, proceeding towards Westminster at a rapid pace, borne by two horses, whose leaders were urging them forwards, running by their sides. The royal party surveyed them with some surprise, for at first the cause of their terror was not visible; but in a few moments a knight on horseback, with six or eight armed retainers, made their appearance at a canter, and as they came in sight of the litter, set up a shout.

“ Hey, Walter! this looks strange,” cried the King. “ I marvel what the pursuers yonder can be so eager to overtake the litter for.”

“ It seems an adventure fit for King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table,” returned Tyrrel, with a smile.

“ Well—be off, then, to the rescue, doughty Paladin !” said Rufus, in the same tone. “ Fitz-Hamon and I, meanwhile, will see what enchanted princesses there may be behind those curtains.”

Tyrrel and the rest rode off, laughing, while the King and his remaining companion advanced to the litter.

A female head was protruded, in which the usual air of pertness and coquetry was for the moment almost obliterated, and a scream proceeded from the rather pretty lips of the “ *suivante*;” but the curtains were quickly drawn aside, and her mistress, a young creature about eighteen, of extraordinary beauty, was presented to the wondering eyes of Rufus.

“ If you are nobles and gentlemen, as you seem,” said the Lady, in the Norman-French,

which was the usual medium of conversation, “you will not molest me on the journey to Westminster.”

William gazed upon her with admiration, which called up blushes to her cheeks, and she turned away her head.

“By the face of St. Luke, who never painted a fairer one than yours, lady, whoever you may be, I marvel not at those fellows yonder being so eager in pursuit. But you are safe now.”

“I am, I believe, near the palace of Westminster,” replied the stranger, “and the baron, who seems to seek me for the sake of my broad lands, will not dare offer violence so near his King’s dwelling.”

“I know not how far your beauty might venture to trust to that,” said Rufus, who, looking round at the moment, saw Tyrrel and the rest engaged in a scuffle with the lady’s pursuers, and, bowing hastily to the occupant of the

litter, galloped off with Fitz-Hamon to their assistance.

“ Ho ! shame, you knaves here !” cried the Red King, as he joined the party. “ Desist ! for shame ! None but cowards would pursue a helpless woman, and then draw sword and lance upon men who have no arms but hunting-knives !”

The sight of William, and his exclamations, suspended the fray in which the combatants were so unequally provided and armed, however numbers and skill might have been fairly matched.

Rufus called up their leader to his side, (an order which was most reluctantly obeyed,) and commanded him to unfasten his visor, which the wearer hesitated for some moments in doing.

When the features were disclosed, William recognised a knight who had been concerned in a conspiracy to dethrone him about four or

five years before, headed by the Earl of Northumberland and others, but which the King's courage and vigour had prevented from taking effect at the time, and of which the leaders had met with rigorous punishment.

“John de Mallette!” he said, with the cold, stern countenance he could assume occasionally, even when under strong passion—“John de Mallette! Remember, I have once pardoned thee, when those who were perhaps not more guilty paid the forfeit of life, lands, or liberty: but I know thee, and mark what I say—if the lady in yonder conveyance suffers aught from thee in future, thou shalt learn to envy the lot of the Earls of Eu and of Northumberland, by comparison with thine own. William of England forgives not a second time!”

De Mallette watched the King's features attentively, and when he waved his hand in token of dismissal, replaced his visor with a sullen and

gloomy scowl, but uttered not a word in reply, as he rode slowly away, accompanied by his armed followers.

Rufus looked after his departing figure for some time, and then turned round to Tyrrel—

“ And yet, Walter, if beauty were any excuse for that ungentle knight’s behaviour, he might find ample justification in the charms of the lady, methinks.”

But when they turned their eyes to where the litter had stood, both the lady and her conveyance had vanished, to the no small disappointment of the King, who was by no means insensible to the influence of female beauty, and longed to ascertain who the fair unknown might be. Even Tyrrel, whose heart was already engaged, felt some curiosity to behold the charms which had rendered the monarch so unusually eloquent in his discourse for the remainder of their ride home. Fitz-Hamon, whose age and

gravity little liked to hear the long discussions and lighter banterings which ensued, concerning blue or black eyes, ivory teeth, and fair or dark tresses, dropped behind, and conversed with the falconers.

It was not long, however, that their curiosity remained ungratified; for the next day there was a public procession through the streets, where the ladies of the court and the Queen Dowager were placed to see the show, in covered galleries. As they passed, the King's attention was drawn towards an elderly dame seated in the front row, which was reserved for persons of rank, and having by her side the identical young creature whose beauty had made such an impression. As they acknowledged the salute made them by Rufus, a blush mounted up to the cheeks of the young beauty as she half uttered an exclamation at the recognition.

“ It is the Lady of Mortaigne, and that must

doubtless be her niece who sits next her, in the white dress. Confess now that she is exquisitely beautiful," said Rufus to his friend Tyrrel. Sir Walter bowed in some confusion.

"It is her whom I saw yesterday for the first time, in that mysterious litter," continued the King.

Tyrrel cast down his eyes and bit his lip hastily, without uttering a word, and began to play with the tassels of the falcon's jesses, who sat upon his wrist.

The reader has probably guessed the truth by this time—they were rivals.

CHAPTER II.

THE CLOISTER.

“ Seek the convent’s vaulted room,
Prayer and vigil be thy doom ;
Doff the green, and don the grey,
To the cloister hence away.”

WALTER SCOTT.

THE vespers and evening services were finished in the church of the Great Monastery or Cathedral of St. Swithin, at Winchester. A profound stillness had succeeded to the deep solemn chanting of the monks, but the faint, sweet perfume of the incense was still discernible in the air, throughout the whole extent of the vast temple, which now seemed increased in size by the deep shadows of a summer’s twilight, fast

fading into perfect darkness. All the numerous tapers that had lately sparkled in various parts of the edifice were extinguished, and only one solitary lamp gave a flickering, uncertain gleam before the image of the Virgin. Three or four devotees yet remained, kneeling singly in various parts of the church, resembling statues, except in the rapid motion of their lips. A cross-looking old man, in the dress of a lay-brother, with an enormous bunch of keys at his girdle, was shuffling along the pavement through the aisles ; as he approached, each person who had lingered to the last moment rose, and (making an obeisance to the high altar) went before him towards the doors he was about to close for the night. One alone of these worshippers seemed too much absorbed in her devotions to notice his approach. Her beautiful face was raised earnestly towards Heaven, and her fixed pale look, and clasped hands, made her the beau-

ideal of a model for the sorrowing Mother of Christ, to whom her devotions were addressed, had there been any painters at that time capable of imitating that graceful head and melancholy expression. The lay-brother stood still before her, but she took no notice; he coughed, and jingled his massive keys together impatiently, but still she did not rise; at last, he addressed her,—“Lady Adela!” At the sound of his voice she rose, and, drawing the veil over her features, followed him, with a deep sigh, to the door.

A tall figure, muffled in a dark cloak, was waiting in the shadow of the cathedral, and stepped forwards to meet her. “Walter!” “Adela!” was all that passed between them, and taking the arm of her conductor the lady proceeded homewards. The old monk looked after their retreating figures, and shook his head with a grim smile, then, turning into the church, he closed the door with a clang that echoed through

the street, and turned his key round with a peevish and unusual jerk in fastening the enormous brazen lock.

Adela de Mortaigne was the daughter of a Norman knight who first distinguished himself at an early age, under the Conqueror, at the battle of Hastings; becoming afterwards a favourite of that monarch, he was rewarded with a rich Saxon heiress, who died in a few years, leaving this only daughter. Her father took the cross and followed the Conqueror's eldest son, Robert Duke of Normandy, to Palestine, where he formed a strict friendship with the father of Sir Walter Tyrrel. When dying of his wounds on the hot and dry sandy plains of Syria, his last thought was of his orphan daughter, whom he recommended to the care of his brother in arms. It was in vain,—a pestilential fever broke out among the crusaders, and Tyrrel's father never returned to Europe; the

rich Anglo-Norman heiress was, of course, under the guardianship of the King of England. The deaths of their parents had brought Walter and Adela together; a mutual attachment was the consequence. Unfortunately, the report of Adela's extraordinary beauty caused in Rufus an irresistible curiosity to see her; in vain she repeatedly remonstrated and entreated to be allowed to remain in the convent she had chosen for an asylum. Her royal guardian, little accustomed to have his wishes thwarted, sent her peremptory orders to appear at his court under the protection of her aunt, a vain and foolish widow, who had been a companion of the Queen Dowager. The King took little pains to disguise his admiration of her beauty, which he swore had been undervalued to him; and her aunt, elated with the prospect of becoming an influential personage through her niece's means, constantly endeavoured to force poor Adela

forward into the monarch's notice. Tyrrel dared scarcely look towards her in the King's presence; whose continual praises of her charms, coupled with his undisguised and avowed contempt for the institution of marriage, kept the lovers in a state of the bitterest and most tormenting apprehensions. Adela had already thrown herself at the feet of William de Breteuil, the treasurer, and Odo de Bayeux, Bishop of Winchester, the king's uncle, to entreat them to induce Rufus to allow her to return to her convent. They refused to interfere, however, and her aunt set herself in determined opposition to such an idea.

It was only by stealth that Walter Tyrrel could exchange a word with her; but on every occasion like the present, if he could steal a moment from his attendance on his sovereign, Adela was sure to find him near as her protector, when she least expected it. As they

wandered a little from the shortest line, which led to her aunt's habitation in the outskirts of the city, the lovers felt their position to be in the highest degree painful and embarrassing. Tyrrel felt that Rufus (whatever he might be to others) had always shewn himself a kind and generous master to *him* ; and the world would accuse him of ingratitude if he crossed the monarch's path in love. Adela suggested they might throw themselves on the King's generosity and ask his consent to their union. But Tyrrel hesitated ; he knew Rufus would bear no contradiction, and even if his consent was obtained, he dreaded the court as a place of abode for his wife. The King would not willingly part with him, and the only course which seemed possible was to leave England and enter the service of some foreign monarch. Yet, as Sir Walter determined on this plan of a secret flight, his feelings drew back from the idea of a deception,

however blameless, which he must practise on his master. We must, however, now look into the interior of the monastery.

In one of the most commodious of the apartments sat the Clastral Prior. The evening was damp, and much rain had fallen in the course of the day ; two or three logs of wood accordingly sparkled and crackled on the hearth, though it was the first of August, and threw a cheerful light round the vaulted stone cell, which would otherwise have appeared rather gloomy. The door opened, and a youth of seventeen or eighteen, in the black robes of a Benedictine, brought in a roasted capon, smoking fresh from the kitchen, and a flask of the rosy, perfumed wine of Bourdeaux. The eyes of the dignitary twinkled as the young man placed them on the table, and rubbing his hands he prepared to do justice to what the latter had brought. The uneasy look on the pale counte-

nance of the youth made him pause, however, and he attempted to make an excuse for his apparent gourmandise. “Thou knowest, my son, that the rule of St. Benedict is ancient enough, and truly more strict than there is any need of. What was well enough for the ‘Fathers of the Desert’ doth not suit these times, (nor, indeed, mine own constitution, for my stomach is somewhat too weak to bear much fasting.) A little relaxation may well be permitted, therefore.”

The young man’s seriousness seemed to deepen.

“Nay, my son, hast thou not been long enough a Benedictine to know that all feathered fowls may be lawfully eaten, notwithstanding the holy founder of our rules prohibited meat? They were created, as thou knowest, on the same day as the fish, and we may infer from thence are of the same nature, though allotted to the air instead of the waters.”

Satisfied in his own mind with this conclusion of monastic logic, the worthy Prior flourished his knife, and was beginning to carve the bird, when a gentle tap was heard at the entrance; the other went to open it, and quickly returned.

“Reverend father, there is a religious man, of the Abbey of Seèz, in Normandy, without; he has brought letters from the abbot, and requests to see you before he partakes of our hospitality.”

The Benedictine cast an anxious look at the plump bird, which was fast cooling,—“Could you not say I am engaged in my private devotions?”

The novice coloured, and answered he had already told the stranger the prior was at supper, who still desired to be admitted.

“Set the flask of Bourdeaux down in that corner,” said the other, with a sigh; “as for the capon—(the stranger is in the gallery?)—well, put that, too, by its side.”

The monk of Seèz was now introduced. He was a very different man from the prior of Winchester,—pale and thin, with a contracted brow, and an eye that seemed capable of divining the inmost thoughts of those he looked at. Having delivered his letters, he spoke of the business which brought him to England, on the affairs of his abbey, and from thence went into a long digression about the exiled archbishop of Canterbury, and his quarrels with the King, about the crusades, and the general aspect of political affairs in Europe.

The prior groaned inwardly, and only answered in monosyllables, now looking up at the vaulted ceiling, and next fixing his eyes on the embers of the fire, heartily wishing his guest back in Normandy, or at any greater distance.

“Your affairs in chancery can easily be settled,” he observed, at last, “and your further journey to London saved; but two days since

the King was here at Winchester, and the chancellor in attendance on him; you will now find them, I believe, at Castle Malwood, a short day's journey, where I heartily wish you success. But you must be feeling fatigue and hunger," continued the prior, "having travelled, as you tell me, from Southampton since the morning, especially after your crossing the sea. I am most anxious you should refresh yourself; to-morrow we will talk further of these things."

Eager to anticipate any reply, he hastened to the door, and calling in Dunstan, (for that was the name of the young man whom we have seen in attendance,) charged him to pay every attention to the stranger.

The monk followed his young guide to the refectory, from which the rest of the community had already retired; the melancholy and reserved humour of the latter damped all his

efforts at conversation, and he questioned him, in vain, on the monarch's retinue, the horses, hounds, and hawks of his followers. Dunstan cast down his eyes, and spoke of other matters.

But the curiosity of the guest was not to be balked, and he questioned the young Benedictine closely about the cause of his entering the order (though such allusions were forbidden by monastic rules.)

“ It is but a short and melancholy tale,” observed the latter, “ but if you have any wish to hear it, there is no reason to conceal what all the world knows. My parents and place of birth I know not, nor probably ever shall; I never felt a mother's care, and all the ties of relationship which attach others to this world, have no existence for me. One only friend I had,” — (here he paused for a few seconds, and continued as follows:)—“ A respectable burgess of Winchester found me, at the dawn of day,

laid at the foot of the stone cross which stands near his house. He brought me up, and would have taught me his own trade; but I felt an invincible disgust at any kind of traffic or business, and my greatest pleasure was to watch the horses I saw in the streets. I longed for the fresh air of the forests and hills, and every holiday or leisure hour was spent outside the city walls, learning the use of the crossbow. My protector was of an austere temper, and harshly reprimanded me for neglecting his business. I was a heedless and passionate boy, and deserted my benefactor, leaving him alone in the world, for he had no children of his own. Alas ! my future days must be spent in deplored my ungrateful conduct.

“ When I was about thirteen, the elder son of the Conqueror, Richard Courtois, as he was called, passed through Winchester, to hunt in the New Forest. My delight was unbounded

at the train that defiled through the streets ; I pressed through the crowd to admire the horses, and ask the falconers a thousand questions about the noble birds they carried. Richard's attention was drawn towards me, and he called me up to his stirrup. My answers pleased him ; and finding I had neither father nor mother, he took me into his service immediately. I was intoxicated with pleasure, and the next morning I went to take leave of my benefactor. He started at seeing my green tunic, with a silver leopard on the arm, and a dagger stuck in my girdle ; and his countenance clouded over with grief and anger when he learnt with whom I had taken service.

“ ‘ Richard le Courtois,’ he repeated over again, ‘ the son of the tyrannical William ! Boy, cast away those trappings of slavery, and forswear the chace. Learn what have been its consequences. I had parents and three sisters.

Our peaceful village was destroyed and burnt, by command of the Norman bastard, to enlarge his chace; the home of my childhood is desolate, and all those dear to me died houseless wanderers. Misfortune attend that day when thou first goest into the forest.' Such were his last words, and what occurred since will forbid the possibility of forgetting them (though I had at that time already learned to laugh and jeer); and I left the old man in anger. A few days afterwards, I had for the first time to attend my new protector to his favourite amusement. I had passed a sleepless night, with anxiety and excitement; the morning was dull and gloomy, and the leaves on the trees trembled without any apparent wind. But a hunter's spirits are not cast down by the weather, and the light-hearted laugh sounded among the riders as we set forth. I listened to every sound, and anxiously watched every opening in the

forest for the sight of a deer. Suddenly we saw an old woman sitting by the side of the path ; she fixed her eye, which gleamed with a strange expression, on our leader, and lifted her withered finger, as if in warning ; but the riders passed her almost without a look. As I passed, she sprung up, and seized my arm with a force I marvelled at in so aged a person. The words she repeated, or rather chanted in a low voice, will be always fixed in my memory : they ran thus—

‘ Light and gay the Norman rideth,
Each his courser free bestrideth !

But their heads shall be heavy, their eyes shall wax dim,
When the forest damp chilleth each heart and each limb !’

I shuddered, and disengaged myself, for I heard the Prince’s voice calling me, and hastened on ; but on looking back, I still saw the woman waving her arms after us, till the boughs of the trees shut her out from sight. It was an open

glade of the forest where the hounds were uncoupled, sloping down to some marshy ground, through which flowed a small brook ; its course, however, was only traceable by the tops of the alders on its banks, for a heavy blue mist or fog lay on a part of the low ground, reaching about as high as the head of a man on horseback. The vapour rose and undulated without any wind, and gradually drew upwards over the heath, towards where the hunting party stood.

“ ‘ Ride ! ride for your lives ! ’ called out the old huntsman ; ‘ that fog is death to whoever breathes it.’

“ Richard laughed ; but his companions urged him not to neglect the old man’s advice, and we rode off to another part of the woodlands. I need not relate the chase of that day ; towards noon we found ourselves in pursuit of a doe near the same place. Before us ran the brook, and on the other side, for the space of a few

hundred yards, lay the fatal mist; we heard the cry of the hounds beyond it, who were evidently close upon their game, but veiled from our sight by the fog. All paused; but the Prince, waving his hand, with a cheer to the hounds, set spurs to his horse, which cleared the brook at a bound, and was directly after hidden from our eyes with his rider. All gazed in each other's face in silence. We made a circuit, crossing the brook at another place, and overtook the hounds as they pulled down their quarry. In another moment, Le Courtois came up, spurring his horse unconsciously, whose distended nostrils and tottering pace shewed how sudden the effect of the vapour had been. His rider's eyes were fixed in a wild stare, and it was a considerable time before he recovered his speech; he still spoke cheerfully, and made light of it, but a cold shivering that attacked him belied his efforts. We were obliged to

support him on his horse on our return, and in two days he was a corpse."

"Strange!" said the monk of Seèz. "I knew that the Conqueror's eldest son died suddenly, but till now never heard the particulars."

"I was now once more without a friend," continued the other, "and something whispered me to return to the protector of my childhood. But my new comrades were thoughtless and gay. Seconded by my own inclinations, they dissuaded me from it, and I entered the service of Richard, son of the Duke of Normandy. My new patron was scarcely twenty; but in all manly exercises, few could be found superior to him. His kindness towards me, and the softened tone of his voice when he spoke of my friendless situation, attached me to him for ever. Daily I remember him in my prayers. Alas! why must I tell what followed?

"It was a cheerful day, and the birds sang mer-

rily, when a noble hart was brought to bay by the hounds near Brockenhurst. Young Richard of Normandy had outridden the rest of the field, and springing from his horse, came to the assistance of the dogs, two or three of whom had already met with their death from the antlers of the stag, whose fierceness, in his despair, was almost an overmatch for my patron's skill and activity; his foot slipped, and the hart seeing his advantage, made a rush against him. At this critical moment, a young knight, his friend and brother in arms, came up, and leaping off his horse, aimed a desperate blow at the deer; the weapon struck the beast's neck in its course, but the point made a deep cut in the arm of him whose life it was intended to save. The wound was not dangerous in itself, but the heated state of the Prince's blood, and the ignorant treatment of the chirurgeons, brought on a fever. He, too, the young, handsome, noble,

generous Richard, was doomed to perish. I watched him day and night, in vain, and when the grave closed over him, I remembered the last words of my foster-father. He, too, was no more. Every day do I reproach myself for having helped to shorten his life by my desertion ; every link of human feeling that bound me to earth is burst ; and too hastily bound by irrevocable vows, which I have already learnt to repent of, my future life is a dark, dreary void, uncheered by a single star."

The young Benedictine buried his face in his hands, and the other had sufficient judgment not to break the silence which followed ; and a lay brother entering with a lamp, they parted for the night.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOREST.

“ It may be, these apparent prodigies,
The unaccustomed terror of this night,
And the persuasion of his augurers,
May hold him back — ”

JULIUS CÆSAR, ACT II., SCENE I.

THE sun rose brightly on the morning of the fatal 2nd August, 1100, and a light breeze chased away the remaining clouds which lingered on the horizon, when a traveller, on a stout forest pony, attended by a guide, passed over the waste ground where the Hospital of St. Cross has been subsequently built, and before losing sight of Winchester, turned and paused

a few moments to admire the scene. In front of him the placid river slowly wound its way among poplars and other trees, through closely-shorn meadows, dotted with sheep and cattle. All nature seemed refreshed by the rain of the preceding day, and drops sparkled on every leaf and twig in the early morning light, while the massive dark towers of St. Swithin's Cathedral rose proudly out of the surrounding verdure. The flowing dress of coarse black cloth, and the round boots (like those of a Chinese mandarin) of the rider, announced his profession and order of a Benedictine; and from the restless intelligent glances that he shot out from under his cowl, thrown partly back to enjoy the morning breeze, the monk of Seèz will be recognised. His face was paler, and his brows more heavily drawn down than ever; something more than usual evidently weighed upon his mind. As they advanced on their journey,

they saw cheerful bands of reapers beginning the harvest and binding up the sheaves; as they proceeded a few miles further, the waving fields of corn became wider and wider apart, and the frequent tracts of open heath more extensive, in proportion as they drew nearer the forest. The guide, who began to grow tired of the continued silence, tried to begin some conversation, but the monk, unusually for him, seemed in no communicative mood, and cut short his guide's attempts at talking, by beginning to recite the Latin psalms and anthems appropriated to the daily service. The sun now began to be inconveniently warm, and they accordingly halted for a short time before entering the New Forest. Leaving Romsey behind them, they now turned into a track less beaten than their former road, where the beech and oak began to narrow the prospect on each side, and in some places threw an agreeable shade across the path; a few miser-

able hovels, which had been hitherto visible, though thinly scattered over the country, soon ceased altogether, and with them all traces of cultivation. It was therefore with some feeling of surprise that the monk and his companion saw a female figure cross the road, at about two hundred paces before them. Neither, however, spoke, and they rode on to the place where the figure had passed. Further than this the ponies would not proceed ; they stopped, snorted, ran backwards, and trembled in every limb. The guide dismounted, and tried to lead them forward ; but their terror appeared to increase, instead of diminishing, in spite of every effort to pacify them. Nor were the riders at all re-assured or satisfied, when on looking round, they saw two eyes, like those of some ferocious animal, glaring upon them from behind the bushes and underwood on their left hand, out of which, in a few seconds, stepped

the figure they had before caught a glimpse of. It was a woman of diminutive size and proportions, whose face, naturally hideous, was puckered into innumerable wrinkles, and her perfectly white hair shewed she had arrived at extreme old age ; yet her step was vigorous and elastic as that of a person of twenty. Her dress consisted of a coarse brown drapery, part of which was drawn over her head, and confined with a wreath of ivy, mixed with the dingy flowers and rich purple berries of the poisonous nightshade (*Atropa Belladonna.*) Resting her hands on a dead branch of a tree, which served her for a staff, she stood motionless in the centre of the road, contemplating the astonished monk and his guide, whose teeth began to chatter with alarm. After a considerable pause, the Benedictine summoned up courage to address this wild-looking being.

- “ Whence, and what art thou ? and by what

means dost thou seem to impede our journey?—
Speak!"

The old woman writhed her features into a still more repulsive expression, disclosing her toothless gums, and waved her hand instead of replying.

"Answer!" resumed the monk. "Is it by your actions that we are stopped on our way to Castle Malwood?"

The hag laughed out in a tone of startling shrillness.

"And what seekest thou there, sir priest?" asked she in turn; "tell me that, ere I let thee proceed!"

"Who art thou, woman, that darest to annoy a servant of holy church on his errand? I charge thee, in the name of ——"

"Stop!" said the hag. "Waste not thy holy breath on me, nor on him surnamed the Red, who will heed them as little as I do."

Then approaching nearer to the horses' heads, which recoiled with instinctive terror, she repeated, in a distinct tone, as follows :—

“ The raven croaked, the raven sang,
He fluttered his wings with mirth and glee,
I marked his note as I stood below,
Where the dark bird sat on his withered tree.

‘ A hundred years are past and gone,
Since first I perched on the moss-grown bough ;
The Saxon is gone—the Norman come ;
But a doomed race is his, I trow !

‘ The vapour dank has caught the *one*,
I chuckled to hear the *second*'s moan,
The *third* shall find, in the greenwood shade,
A couch of heather, a grave of stone.’ ”

Having finished these words, the witch darted under the shadow of the trees, among the hollies and other underwood ; and the ponies, now relieved from the painful influence her presence seemed to have over them, started off at a pace which soon carried them away from the spot,

and was, with some difficulty, checked by their riders. As soon as they slackened their speed, “It is the hag of the forest,” called out the guide; “misfortune and ill-luck always happen to those who meet with her. If your reverence’s business would wait till to-morrow, it will be far better to turn back to Romsey. How unlucky you could not speak a few Latin words when she first crossed the path!”

“My good friend,” said the monk, “all I have heard only makes me more eager to reach the castle; let us hasten—and Our Lady grant that no misfortune has yet happened.”

So saying they urged their animals forward, in order, if possible, to reach the end of their journey before noon.

It was not long before they overtook some ragged but tawdrily dressed jongleurs, or minstrels; as the appearance of austerity about the monk did not seem to promise them any pros-

pect of gain by their profession, he was saluted with a satirical joke and a jeering laugh, which scandalized the countryman who acted as guide not a little.

A few hundred yards farther on, an open glade of the wood presented to their sight several grooms exercising some handsome horses, which shewed that the object of their expedition was not far off. The animals were very different from the large heavy war-horse, or destrier, required for the battle or tournament. These were of a more elegant breed, from Andalusia, or the south of Italy, imported at great expense, for such purposes as the chace, only by the highest and richest class of the nobility, and had probably some oriental blood in their veins. The gay liveries and badges on the arms of their conductors shewed that they belonged to some person of distinction. As they approached, the travellers made inquiries

of them, from the replies to which they learnt that Rufus was holding his court at Castle Malwood, surrounded by most of the great officers of state and nobles ; but that the King, for some unknown reason, had suddenly countermanded the orders given, and had not gone out to hunt that morning as usual. “ *Deo gratias !* ” ejaculated the monk ;—“ and Sir Robert Fitz-Hamon, is he at the King’s court ? ” The man laughed. “ Truly, I should think so, sir priest, since these horses belong to him and to Prince Henry ;—he is now the dear friend of his brother. It went differently, I ween, a few years back, when one besieged the other in Normandy. Fitz-Hamon is easy to be found, but those of your cloth are seldom welcome in Red William’s court, unless they bring full bags of gold with them.”

The monk of Seèz shook his head and passed on through the trees ; and on emerging from their shade into another open space in the

forest, a scene presented itself which had almost the effect of enchantment when compared to the previous solitude.

The castle itself stood on a gently sloping eminence, and on its highest turret, the royal banner of England was waving its three-golden lions, or leopards, in the sunshine. As the buildings, however, were far too small to contain the concourse of Norman barons who were assembled, with their numerous trains of horses and attendants, extensive tents and temporary erections of wood, surrounded by gay-coloured pennons, half filled the open space before the walls, presenting the busy appearance of a fair or market. On one side might be seen sutlers' carts, cook-shops, and wine-booths, distinguished by a green bough; on the other, a juggler was performing tricks of sleight of hand with swords, or cups and balls; again an itinerant minstrel was singing, at the top of his

voice, an Anglo-Norman hunting-song; each surrounded by a motley crowd of various classes. In another place, regardless of the noise, some noble falcons plumed and dressed their feathers, perched on the wrist or on the hoops suspended from the shoulders of the falconers, who busily and loudly descanted on, and discussed, the merits of their different birds. Nor were various kinds of hounds wanting in the assemblage,— harpers, conjurors, huntsmen, fools, and jesters in their motley coats, mixed with grooms, and a few of the staring rustics.

As the monk pushed on through this scene, the frequent looks of curiosity and surprise which were turned towards him shewed how unusual in that place was the presence of one of his order and appearance; yet ecclesiastics of a more worldly description were not unknown there, for when he arrived at the gates of the castle, he was obliged to stand aside and wait

whilst a person, in a rich violet tunic, furred with sables, mounted on a spirited Neapolitan jennet, rode up, preceded and followed by about a dozen persons on foot and horseback, some of whom carried hawks, and accompanied by two or three large and stately greyhounds. The priest dismounted and bowed as the train entered — it was Ralph Flambard, Bishop of Durham and Lord Chancellor of England, who threw a sharp scrutinizing look upon him, as if to try to divine his errand, as he passed in to the king's apartment.

But it was not so easy for the monk of Seèz to gain admission, and the surly porter was on the point of calling to some of the men-at-arms to drive him away, when, fortunately, Robert Fitz-Hamon himself approached the archway, and recognised in the monk an old acquaintance. The porter offered no more resistance, but retired to his seat, muttering that he could not

any longer answer for what sort of vagabonds might come into the court-yard.

Eagerly did the Benedictine ask to speak with Sir Robert in private, for he knew how high a degree of favour and friendship he enjoyed with the King. As soon as his request was granted, the monk related that he had come in haste to warn Rufus of some impending danger which he was convinced hung over him. He had been visited, he said, with a terrible dream the night before, at Winchester, in which he thought he stood in the great church of St. Swithin, which was illuminated with burning tapers as if for some high festival, but no living being was visible besides himself. Suddenly he dreamt the King entered the cathedral with a proud and haughty step, keeping his cap on his head, and strode up to the high altar. A strange and fierce hunger seemed to possess the monarch, for he wrenched open the pyx,

and devoured the consecrated wafers within it. Not contented with this audacious action, he next seized the large crucifix and began to gnaw with his teeth the figure of Christ. Suddenly the image raised its arm and struck the King on the mouth. Rufus fell back on the pavement, as if blasted by a thunderbolt, and smouldering flames and a thick dark smoke arose, filling the whole church, and extinguishing the tapers, with a noisome vapour, at which instant he sprung up terrified from sleep. The priest continued that he could not but fear some fearful calamity was at hand, and begged the King might be warned of it.

Fitz-Hamon, who had listened attentively, bit his lip, and took a stride or two across the apartment for a time before answering. "It is strange! most strange!" he said, at last; "at any other time I should not have heeded it,—excuse me, father,—I should have treated it as merely the

vision of a cloistered imagination, shut out from the world, and disturbed by vigils and fasting. But now——it is a most strange coincidence!"

"Sir Knight," said the monk, gravely, "remember that holy men of old times have received communications from heaven by night, through means of a dream, and such things are not to be lightly treated. But why is my dream more strange at this time than at any other?"

Fitz-Hamon looked round a moment, and laid his hand on the other's arm. "Listen," said he, "to what passed last night. I slept, with some others, in the King's antechamber. At the dead hour of midnight, when all was still in the castle, a loud and fearful cry proceeded from the apartment of Rufus. I started up to listen, and distinctly heard him call on the Holy Virgin for help. We hastily entered his room, and found him pale as a dying man, bathed in a cold sweat, with hands and teeth clenched toge-

ther, like one in agony. We passed the rest of the night with him, and tried to cheer him by conversation, without success. As the day broke, he sent for his uncle, the Bishop of Winchester, who remained with him some time alone. Since then, William's countenance has been gloomy and pale, and the hunt ordered for this morning put off till the next."

The monk fixed his eye triumphantly on the speaker.

"It is even as I said, then, Sir Robert; Heaven gives warning of some impending evil, which prudence may avert. Could I not relate my vision myself to the King?"

Fitz-Hamon frowned.

"I fear it would but chafe and vex him; but follow me,—I will myself be the speaker instead."

They proceeded together accordingly to the great stone hall, where Rufus had for some time been at table with the rest of the nobles.

The conquest of England by the Normans had introduced a comparatively great degree of civilization and refinement, which was particularly conspicuous in the style of their meals, and the higher classes affected to look with ridicule and contempt on the rude cookery and boisterous carousals of our Saxon ancestors. The Conqueror had been renowned for the luxury and splendour of his table, and his son continued the same style of living, perhaps as much from policy as from any personal inclination to excess in the pleasures of the table. Still the feast which was spread in the great hall of Castle Malwood would have appeared rude and coarse to our modern ideas of refinement; venison and game in profusion formed the principal part, and, agreeably to ancient custom, the oak tables, which lined the hall, were crowded with various ranks, with the sole distinction of sitting above or below the massive salt-cellar in the centre.

At the upper end, where the pavement was raised by a step, was placed a cross table; at this sat the King, a little flushed with the wine he had drank to dispel his morning's uneasiness. Close to his right hand was his brother, Prince Henry, the youngest son of the Conqueror, whose handsome intellectual countenance made that of Rufus appear more coarse and unpleasing than usual by the contrast, notwithstanding its open frankness, which an observer would have sought for in vain in Henry's looks.

As they entered the hall, the quick eye of the King fell upon Fitz-Hamon and his unusual companion.

“Thou comest late to the board to-day, Sir Baron,” called out the monarch. “But hey! what hast thou brought that shaveling here for? We want none such black crows in our royal forest.”

Sir Robert approached close to the King, and

begged for a private audience of what he had to say ; but Rufus ordered him to tell it out without delay—there were none but friends to hear it, he said. Fitz-Hamon accordingly repeated, in a low voice, what the monk had told him. Prince Henry, and the rest who sat within hearing, exchanged glances with each other ; but the King had by this time recovered his nerves, and threw himself back in his seat with a loud laugh.

“ Mort de ma vie ! my Lords,” he said, looking round at the anxious faces who surrounded him ; “ this is a true monk, and like all his brethren, dreams to gain a piece of money. But it shall not be said that one of any degree sought our court, and went away empty-handed ; let him have a few broad pieces given him, De Breteuil,” turning to his treasurer, “ and tell him,” continued the King, raising his voice so as to be distinctly heard at the lower end of the hall, where the monk stood, with his gaze fixed

on Rufus. "Tell him, next time he dreams, to bode some better luck to our person. And now Henry, let us hear that minstrel whose skill you vaunted so much last evening."

The Prince rose and beckoned to a young man, in a gay and rather fantastic dress, who pushed by the monk, and advanced up the centre of the hall. Having made his obeisance to the King and his patron, he looked round the assembly, and after a short prelude on the instrument he carried, sang in a clear manly voice as follows :—

SONG OF THE NORMAN MINSTREL.

O bright gleams the sun in the gay morning hour,
And bright in the air waves the green forest bough ;
Sing ho for the chace, which has ever the power
To drive away care from the sorrowful brow.

The priest and the merchant, the knave and the knight,
Their hobby, their goshawk, or laneret* may bring ;
They may follow the hare, stop the partridge's flight,
But the chase of the red deer is sport for a king !

* A species of hawk.

O swift he springs up, turns his ear to the wind,
Over fern, gorse, and heather, he skims like a bird ;
For the horn, merry sounding, re-echoes behind,—
Not a hound of the pack from his traces has erred !

O *then*, when each bold gallant heart thrills with pleasure,
O where is the craven would linger behind ?
Who timidly pauses, each danger to measure,
No smile on the features of Beauty shall find !

“ Gramercy ! good fellow !” cried Rufus, striking the table with his hand, “ ‘tis a song of the right sort, and worth a hundred of such empty trash as yonder monk and his dreams. Fill up that cup for him with the best Gascon wine—and keep it thyself,” he added, as the minstrel offered to return it to the page. The singer bowed low in token of gratitude, for the gift was of silver-gilt, richly and elegantly wrought.

“ ‘Tis scarcely more than an hour past noon, my Lords,” said the Red King, as he emptied his cup; “ we have yet good space of time to kill a hart or a hind before night. Call the old

huntsman ! bid him couple up the hounds, and be ready to attend at Tyrrel's orders. We set forth in half-an-hour."

At these words all rose from table, and the acclamations of the courtiers drowned the voices of Fitz-Hamon and the Bishop of Winchester, who looked grave, and tried in vain to remonstrate.

It was a gay and gallant cavalcade that set out shortly after ; nearly two hundred of the noblest and best of England's riders were there. The huntsmen, yeomen prickers, and beaters for game, with long poles, were scarcely less in number. Most of the horses were, as already observed, of an elegant and spirited breed, from the south of Europe ; and if a modern sportsman would be inclined to smile at the massive wrought iron stirrups, the absurdly peaked boots, and tunics, resembling a wagoner's frock of the

riders, he could not but do justice to the firmness of their seat, and the graceful skill of their management of their horses.

In front rode the King, on a magnificent grey Andalusian, conspicuous by his superior horsemanship, and the highly-ornamented ivory hunting-horn which hung from his girdle. Close to his side was Sir Walter Tyrrel, in his official capacity of bow-bearer, accompanied, agreeably to ancient custom, by two superb milk-white dogs, of a breed nearly extinct, called at that time greyhounds, but very different in their rough coats, strength of limb, and sagacious countenances, from the slight and senseless high-bred animals we now give that name to.

There seemed an unaccountable gloom upon every one's spirits. The company rode in little knots, of three or four together, conversing in a low tone; and it was remarked that the huntsman, at starting, had blown on his horn the

motet betokening the death of the stag, instead of the one appropriated to going out in the morning. The monarch and his bow-bearer alone seemed in more than usual spirits ; but if the little circle which surrounded them partook for an instant of their gaiety, it soon relapsed again into silence. Prince Henry rode apart, occasionally joining one or other of the detached groups of horsemen.

The sleuth hounds, or finders, were now uncoupled, and the attendants on foot carefully beat round all the places where the deer usually harboured, whilst the King and his nobles stood apart, screened by the bushes and under-wood, prepared to shoot at the game as it passed by them, with the swift gazehounds, in readiness to start, at a moment's warning, after any deer that might be but slightly wounded. But no deer were to be found ; not even any of their fresh traces were visible ; and nothing was dis-

turbed by the dogs, except occasionally a scared rabbit started up from the furze, and darted with rapid doublings among and under the horses, when, as it got clear of the outside riders, a goshawk was let loose after it, which followed all its turnings and windings among the bushes, and when within a few yards, suddenly dashed down and seized her prey.

It was in vain that the hunters shifted their ground, and tried fresh thickets. The impatience of Rufus at his bad sport soon became absolute ill-humour, as the afternoon passed away without better success.

The hunt now separated itself into various small parties, who scattered themselves over the forest, for the shadows began to lengthen, and the western part of the sky assumed the rich and glorious tints of sunset, and each was anxious that the day should not be entirely wasted. It so happened that the King

and Tyrrel found themselves several hundred yards in advance of the small party that followed them, in a beautiful forest glade, sloping to the westward; the declining light tinted the graceful beeches and darker-coloured oaks with its rich orange hues. The Monarch and his companion paused to look round, as they emerged from under the shadow of the thick trees into the open glade. No sign of human habitation was visible as far as the eye could range, except that at a little distance stood some heaps of rubbish, where a few houses had been; among them rose a dilapidated piece of wall, with a round Saxon arch, which showed it had once formed part of a church or chapel. At that instant, a noble hart sprung up from among some tall fern, within thirty yards before their horses, and proudly tossing his antlers, bounded away over the heath. The King took a hasty aim and let fly an arrow; but it whistled

past the game, and fell harmless on the ground some distance down the valley.

“ Ho ! there he goes untouched !—the first deer we have seen to-day. Diable ! Send a shaft after him, Tyrrel. Take steady aim.”

As William spoke, he raised his left hand to shade his eyes from the setting sun. Sir Walter drew the bow with a firm hand, till the string nearly touched his right ear,—the shaft flew forth with a sudden twang. But there stood a noble young oak-tree in the direction the stag had taken ; the arrow glanced from its stem, and struck deep into the King’s side, which, as we have said, was exposed by lifting his arm. The unfortunate Prince sprung up out of the saddle, with a loud cry. He fell heavily from his horse to the ground—a momentary convulsion passed over his features—and all was still !

Tyrrel gazed for a short time, as if petrified, upon him who the moment before was riding

by his side in the vigorous health of manhood. He looked wildly round. On one of the heaps of rubbish stood the forest witch, and a mocking laugh burst from her as he caught her eye. The knight's brain seemed to turn round; he struck his forehead in agony, and dashing the spurs into his horse's flank, he rode off at full speed, with the twang of the bow-string and that wild laugh ringing in his ears.

The evening twilight was fading into darkness, when the quiet inhabitants of the village of Lymington were disturbed by the sudden arrival of a horseman, spurring his tired steed down to the sea-shore in haste, with a wild demeanour.

The owners of some fishing-boats, which lay close to the beach, were immediately summoned, and after some time, by dint of bribes and threats, one of them was induced to comply with

the stranger's desire, and set sail for Havre de Grace as soon as possible.

It was not long before the moon rose, and threw her pale clear light over the rippling waves, through which the little vessel was already cutting her course to the westward of the Isle of Wight. At her stern there was a man standing, and earnestly gazing, with folded arms, towards the land which receded from his sight, silent and immovable as a sculptured image, to which the fixed marble paleness of his countenance, as the light fell on his features, gave him no small resemblance. He was dressed in a green hunting tunic, on the breast of which two slips of white cloth had been hastily fixed in the form of a cross, shewing that the wearer was on his way to join the army of the crusaders in Palestine. Motionless and bare-headed, he remained till the light breeze, which now sprung up from the land, carried the vessel past the

lofty chalk precipices of the Needles, with her head directly southward, in the direction of Normandy. As England's coast faded from sight, he went below, and consigned himself to the narrow cabin, where he passed the restless hours of the night in pacing up and down as far as its limits allowed. The boatmen contemplated him with a fearful curiosity, not unmixed with awe; for they could never have divined the cause of the thoughts which agitated his mind. He was the involuntary murderer of his friend and Sovereign; yet, though stained with the blood of a King of England, his hands were innocent as far as regards pre-meditated guilt, for he had been but an unconscious instrument in the hands of fate. But his mind was too much agitated to reason so calmly at present.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CITY.

“ First note that he is near you in descent,
And, should you fall, he is the next will mount.”

HENRY VI. ACT III. SCENE I.

LADY ADELA sat by the light of a solitary lamp, in the suburbs of Winchester, before her embroidery frame. She often stopped to listen for an imaginary sound in the distance, and as she resumed her labours, an involuntary tear would drop sometimes on the work. Towards the middle of the day she had received a message, delivered to her aunt, but, as she well guessed, intended for her, that Sir W. Tyrrel would visit them, since there was to be no royal hunt on

that day. It was now past eight in the evening, and the lights in the windows of the citizens of Winchester began to disappear one after the other, while the streets were already as silent as at midnight.

Suddenly the sound of a horse at a distance caught her ear; it came rapidly nearer and nearer, and eagerly the lady threw open the narrow casement and leant half out. The beams of the moon shone full on the rider, whose gay dress and ornamented hunting-horn shewed that he belonged to the court. A slight steam rose from his horse's flank, which had evidently been ridden hard and fast; but instead of pausing before the house, he spurred on, and to her great surprise, and we may suppose disappointment, Adela recognised, instead of those of her lover, the features of Prince Henry. She remained long at the window, looking, as far as her sight would reach, on each side, and thought

she distinguished an unusual stir and bustle in the town. At last the chill of the night air warned her to retire; but we may probably suppose that her rest was scarcely less disturbed that night than Tyrrel's, who, as we have seen, was already divided from her by a considerable part of the waves of the Channel.

The next morning, all was confusion and excitement in the good city of Winchester; all business seemed to be suddenly suspended, and groups of people hurried backwards and forwards, each inquiring of his neighbour with an eager and hurried curiosity, for, as in almost all cases of strange and startling intelligence, a thousand wild rumours were current, and each exaggerating or distorting the truth. Throughout the morning the scene was enlivened occasionally by the arrival of the great barons and knights, who had formed a part of the late King's retinue, as they came galloping in, at

intervals of a quarter or half an hour, with their grooms, squires, and attendants. Towards noon, the crowds poured from all parts of the city to the space surrounding the great Gothic cross. Presently a few shouts were heard, and the people, instead of joining, looked at each other with surprise and curiosity. A cavalcade now pushed through the crowd, and made its way to the steps of the cross; it was numerous, but seemed a motley assemblage of all ranks, and without order or regularity. Some of the substantial burgesses of Winchester were there, mounted, to their great discomfort and annoyance, upon the spirited hunters of the royal household, and riding close to some of the proudest of the Norman nobility. In their centre, the youngest son of the Conqueror, **Henry**, surnamed Beauclerc, formed a conspicuous object. The women admired his graceful seat and noble bearing, as he reined in his

snorting charger to distribute condescending smiles and nods among the prettiest of the faces that lined the street, and “God and our Lady bless that handsome young face” was heard more than once from the lips of several portly dames in their scarlet kirtles and velvet hoods. The men looked on in silent suspense, save now and then an audible curse came from some one on whose head the staves of the men-at-arms fell, in clearing the way for the horsemen. Yet no one seemed to have anticipated what followed.

As soon as a circle could be formed, a man, with a herald’s tabard hastily huddled over a riding tunic, ascended the upper step, and proclaimed, in the name, and by the authority, of the Mayor of Winchester, with many others, nobles and knights, there present, Henry I., King of England.

The multitude were evidently taken by sur-

prise, and it was not till the immediate attendants on Henry had several times thrown up their caps and shouted, that they joined in the cry of Long live King Henry, which was zealously seconded by clapping of hands from the fair part of the spectators alluded to. They were rewarded with fresh smiles and bows from Henry himself, who had frowned and bit his lip for a moment on perceiving the tardiness of their male companions to join in the acclamations he expected.

Ere the crowd had time to disperse, a heavy rumbling was heard, and a long string of waggons came on, at the fastest pace the road permitted, taking the direction of London. These were charged with the royal treasure, which Henry had judged it most prudent to secure possession of without delay. They were followed by that Prince himself in all haste, with an escort and retinue of almost all those who had been assembled at Castle Malwood.

As the throng pressed down one of the narrow streets, there was a necessary stoppage of the thoroughfare; and two ladies, closely veiled, were obliged to wait for a time, nor could they avoid hearing the conversation that passed around them.

“Saw you how gruff and gloomy De Breteuil, the treasurer, looked?” said a person close to them.

“And good reason too,” answered a man in the garb of a falconer.” It was not hard words alone that were bandied between them, though I heard their voices loud enough, I promise you.”

“How so? What mean you?” asked two or three voices at once.

“I mean that when King Henry yonder came to the Treasury, and began to give his orders, De Breteuil stopped him at once, and told him, as they say, that the treasure belonged to his elder brother, Duke Robert of Normandy, as

well as the crown of England; that he was a loyal subject, and would keep them for the rightful owner."

"A brave, true heart, though he is a Norman," called out a voice in the crowd.

"Hush! for our Lady's sake. Silence! Didst not thou see that old baron turn his head and look grim at us?"

"Well, all I know is, I saw Prince Henry's sword flashing as he grasped De Breteuil by the throat," resumed the other speaker; "then came five or six of the King's knights, pushing their way through the passages. Such clattering of spurs! such fierce looks! such loud oaths!—by the mass, it was more like a tavern than a Prince's house. I only marvel there was no blood spilt to-day."

"Enough of that yesterday!" returned an old man, whose high yellow cap announced that he belonged to the proscribed race of the Hebrews.

“ Is the homicide yet taken ? They say Tyrrel fought with the King for an hour, before he slew the oppressor of the land. It is written,— ‘ Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.’ ”

“ Help ! Air—for Heaven’s sake, air !” cried one of the veiled females, as her companion sank senseless against her shoulder on catching the words uttered by the Jew, though muttered in an under tone.

The crowd made way, and as her veil was drawn back to give her air, the profusion of rich hair and the extraordinary beauty of the countenance that became visible, excited a murmur of admiration in the beholders. One of the Norman barons who followed in Henry’s train was at that moment urging his way through the street. His horse’s progress was arrested, and as he looked over the heads of the bystanders, his attention was instantly fixed by

the loveliness of the young creature, who began to recover her senses: as she became sensible how much she was the object of attention, and encountered the ardent gaze of the knight fixed upon her, the colour returned in deep blushes to her cheeks, and, turning her face towards her companion, she again concealed it in her veil. The crowd pushed on, and the Norman, who had been so struck with the beauty of Adela (for it will be conjectured it was herself), was unable to approach nearer, though he made his horse curvet and prance by the spur in order to penetrate the dense mass of spectators. He was accordingly obliged to be contented with inquiring and learning her name from some of those who were near.

The crowd had passed on, and the street had become clearer, but the lady was too painfully moved by what she had heard to recover herself immediately. What a change in her destinies. The tyrannical Prince, whose pursuits she so

much dreaded, was no more ! But how ! Slain ! By the hand of whom ? By his dearest friend, and the man to whom her affections were engaged. One weight was scarcely removed from her heart, when another, still more overwhelming, was crushing her,—the thought that Tyrrel was a homicide, flying for his life from the pursuit of justice. Had the crime been committed for her sake, in a sudden fit of phrensy ? She dared not ask herself that question.

The Jew, who stood near her, observing that she seemed little able to move, approached them, and offered the ladies the use of his house, which was close at hand, till the youngest of the two should be recovered, and the city once more quiet. His offer was accepted, but not without reluctance on the part of Adela's companion, who had a horror of the Jewish race even more violent than the usual hatred under which the latter laboured in those times.

As they entered the low, gloomy dwelling of

the Hebrew, the old man's daughter greeted them cheerfully, and brought a repast from an inner chamber to set before her unexpected guests ; but neither the ladies nor her father would touch what she had provided.

“ Arise ! my father,” said the damsel,—“ arise ! Eat bread and drink wine ; let thy face be cheerful, since the oppressor of the race of Judah is smitten.”

The old man frowned.

“ Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh, Miriam. Who knows what this new Prince who hath arisen in the land may do unto us ? There will be wars, doubtless ; and who shall provide the money for them but the poor Hebrews ? And is not this man, also, brother to him that is gone ?”

There was a silence for some moments ; both father and daughter looked down with gloomy countenances, till the former recollected himself, and addressed his temporary guests.

“Pardon me, noble Christian ladies,—for such you seem to be,—but we are a pillaged and persecuted race, and the rod of the oppressor is ever held over our heads.”

Adela replied in a few words of compassion, which seemed to touch the heart of the old man, so long habituated to scorn and insult from all Christians who addressed him, and encouraged him to relate to them how he had been outraged and ill-treated.

“I had a son, the staff and hope of my old age,” said the Jew;—“had, I say, for I call him no longer so when he perseveres in following the hated faith of the Nazarenes.”

“Holy Mother!” exclaimed the elder lady, starting up. “Come hence, Adela; it were a sin to listen to such blasphemies against our holy religion.”

“Your pardon, ladies,” returned the old man, meekly. “Your faith is, I doubt not, dear to you, and you can therefore suppose what my feelings

must be at my child's forsaking the ancient worship of his forefathers. It was a heavy load for me to bear when your priests persuaded him to embrace their creed. I reasoned in vain with him ; I fasted, and prayed, and put on sackcloth, but my prayers were not granted. At length, in my despair, I remembered the King had promised to stand my friend, in consideration of services done him. I knew, moreover, that with gold anything can be done ; I collected nearly all my little wealth and offered it to the King, whom they called the Red, if he would cause the priests to deliver my son back to me. He took the gold ; for when did he ever refuse pieces of money ? He promised to return to me the prop of my old age."

Adela and her aunt looked at each other, but the Jew proceeded, without noticing them.

" Yes, the sum was paid down to him ; and I said, Surely the words of the King will prevail

with the youth to return to me. But no! He took no heed of the commands of William, and I had wasted my substance in vain; insult and injury were heaped on my grey hairs when I asked for my bags of gold to be returned. The bitter laugh of the King pierced to my heart as he said that he should keep the gold as a fee for the trouble he had been at."

The ladies could hardly repress a smile; but Adela, at least, was unwilling to vex the old man, and exerted herself to utter a word or two of sympathy before they departed from the dwelling of the Hebrew.

Suddenly the deep heavy booming of ~~the~~ great bell of St. Swithin's reached their ears and recalled her mind to its own painful reflections.

In front of the cloisters was waiting one ~~of~~ the common, rudely-constructed carts of ~~the~~ country, drawn by a rough pony. The char-

coal-burner, to whom it belonged, stood, cap in hand, in the middle of a circle of monks and a few townspeople, who perplexed him, and interrupted each other, with their numerous questions. The cart was half filled with heather, on which lay, disfigured and bloody, what had been England's King but a day before; yet even in death that countenance preserved its expression of mockery and haughtiness, and the royal signet ring still glittered on the stiffened finger.

There is something in the aspect of death, more especially under any unusual or violent circumstances, at which our nature feels a chilling, undefinable sensation of awe. Even the most careless and unthinking will step lightly, and converse in whispers, in presence of the dead. Silence, deep, if not sorrowful, succeeded, whilst the monks prepared to receive the body. The shaft of the fatal arrow was still remaining

in the wound, broken off near the end. One of the bystanders, who had just joined the curious group, came forward to assist in lifting the lifeless remains from their humble conveyance,—a sudden start and exclamation, which broke from him, arrested the attention of all present.

“ It is the same ! The arrow is the same ! ” cried he,—and looks of earnest surprise and curiosity were bent upon him from all quarters.

“ That arrow was made in my workshop,” said he, in answer to a question from the prior, who by this time had made his appearance among the black-robed brethren. “ It was but yesterday morning that I brought that arrow, with three others of the best and finest workmanship, to Castle Malwood. The King took the arrows and praised them much, as he well might do, though I say it that should not ; and a right royal payment he ordered me.

Well, he gave two to his bow-bearer,—Sir W. Tyrrel they call him,—and he said, with a laugh, ‘ Do thou take them, Wat, for a better and steadier hand than thine never drew bow; thou wilt make a good use of them, and bring down thy game in a trice.’ ”

“ And the hand of that very knight slew him !” ejaculated a monk, crossing himself, and looking upwards.

The assistants looked in each other’s faces and imitated the motion of the Benedictine.

The body was now carried into the monastery, while preparations were made for its interment on the next day. The charcoal-burner, who had brought the remains of Rufus, stood in deep reflection for some time; no one had thought of rewarding his loss of time and labour.

“ Well,” muttered he, after a time, “ I did no more than I ought when I brought the dead King here; nor yet for the sake of a piece of

money. But, somehow, some or other of those grand fine nobles and knights might have cared a little more for their master than to let him die all alone on the forest-side, and there leave him!—Thank heaven, I am only Purkiss, the charcoal-burner, and no king!” and, shrugging his shoulders, he departed with this philosophical reflection.

Rufus was unregretted—perhaps justly,—or, it may be, the reverse. It is not when a monarch is in possession of health and power that mankind are able to judge fairly of his character,—it is not till he has fallen beneath the stroke of death that the real degree of estimation he has been held in shews itself, in any case,—when we are able to look back on the occurrences of his reign as belonging to the irrevocable past; and both friends and enemies learn to set a juster value upon the qualities he has or has not possessed. But even then the *consequences* of

the virtues or failings of a sovereign are still often undeveloped or misunderstood, and it is not therefore surprising, if, among the subjects of the Red King, there was more inclination, generally, to rejoice than to mourn at his sudden death. They remembered the heavy fiscal exactions of his exchequer, the unyielding haughtiness of his temper, his severe and arbitrary mode of rule, without once reflecting or reasoning on what oppressions and evils might have ensued to them had he wielded the sceptre with a milder or feebler sway, unable to curb the encroaching, domineering spirit of the churchmen, or the more openly unbridled violence of the barons.

“ *Dies iræ, dies illa,
Crucis expandens vexilla,
Solvet cœlum in favilla.*”

Such were the sounds that rolled under the

arched roof of the crowded cathedral; but the feelings of the spectators seemed untouched, and no tears were seen on any cheek, as they looked on, with a cold and unimpassioned curiosity, during the performance of the funeral ceremonies. The monks were ranged, in lengthened order, in their stalls; the rosy and dignified prior of Winchester stood at the altar, and went through the ritual mechanically, with a voice that shewed he too felt as perfectly unconcerned in the office as the bystanders. There were only two in that large assembly who seemed to feel that it was no ordinary occasion which had brought them together. The monk of Seèz sat there, and was earnestly watching the pallid countenance of his nearest neighbour, who, instead of joining with the rest of the choir, was gazing with clasped hands, and a look of more than common interest, on the royal bier. His lips moved—the Norman monk leant forward to

listen, but could only distinguish the words, “I will visit the sins of the father upon his race.”

On that fifth of August, their brother Benedictines at Westminster were engaged in a scene of a different nature;—their abbey sparkled with numberless tapers, and fragrant clouds of incense curled upwards to its fretted roof: the crowd within its walls shouted loudly, and the populace outside the church responded to their cry, for the commencement of a new reign is always hailed by them with joy, and Maurice, the aged bishop of London, had just anointed, and set the crown of England upon, the head of Henry I.

Though hastily summoned, yet there was no want of nobles and barons to do homage; and the distinguished, handsome person of the new sovereign seemed designed by nature herself to wear those royal robes, and the diadem that

shone on his lofty brow. The King looked round with a dignified and graceful demeanour; and the procession passed on by the chapel and shrine of St. Edward the Confessor. At that moment, a small scroll of parchment rolled from the richly-decorated tomb to the ground, apparently brushed off by the monarch's robe. The bishop at his side stooped to raise it; but on glancing his eye over its contents, the countenance of the prelate changed, and he tried to conceal the writing. The quick eye of the King, however, had already remarked it.

“ How now, my Lord ! what means this ? Is there treason afoot so early,” cried Henry, (with the suspicion which naturally attends every prince who reigns by an insecure or unjust title,) as he snatched the parchment from the tremulous hands that held it, and read, with more dismay than he chose to give expression to

by looks or words, the following lines, couched in Latin verse and Gothic characters:—

He that usurps a brother's right,
A parent's anguish deep shall know ;
His child shall never wear that crown,
Gain'd in bad faith, and dimm'd by woe.

CHAPTER V.

THE PILGRIM.

“ Knowest thou the land where the gay citrons bloom,
Where the gold orange gleams 'mid foliage gloom,
Where gentle zephyrs breathe from azure skies,
Where the dark myrtles and the laurel rise ?”—*GÖETHE.*

AUTUMN had begun to paint the foliage of the vines with its rich and varied tints, and their branches had just been relieved from the rich burden of the fruit ; and the peasants were returning from the vintage in their heavy carts, drawn by oxen, through the fertile plains of Lombardy. A brilliant sunshine, and the clear blue sky of Italy, shed their charm over the whole picture, which was enlivened by the gay songs of the vine-dressers.

A broad and noble river was rolling placidly through a valley of rich green pastures, bounded by steep hills, and shaded with lofty trees ; the blue line of the Mediterranean was just visible in the distance. There were sounds of an unusual nature in that valley, which came up from a numerous encampment below, which, however, seemed of so mixed and motley a nature, that it was difficult to conjecture what had brought it to that spot. There was too much of a military air about it, as well as too large a number of tents pitched, for it to be considered a mere party of pleasure or hunting excursion. On the other hand, there was a kind of oriental pomp and luxury displayed, which seemed but little adapted to the business of war, and on more than one of the silken banners and showy tents the crescent could be distinguished, mixed in a strange way with various other emblems. Discipline there seemed little or none, the camp

being split into little companies, who each did what seemed best in their own eyes. Many of these were scattered about in various directions, and jests, loud laughter, and drinking songs, were heard from the merry groups.

A stranger was descending the winding path which led down from the hills to the meadows where the encampment lay. He had evidently travelled far, and seemed too much occupied with his own thoughts to notice the beauty of the landscape. His dress was the usual pilgrim's habit, of coarse stuff, with a broad hat, and a cross on his breast; yet there was something in his step and his whole demeanour which almost belied his peaceful garb and downcast looks.

The scene just described had been hidden from his sight by the low trees and shrubs through which his path led him, and it was therefore with a start of surprise that he came

suddenly upon a party of ten or a dozen men, stretched on the grass round a large jar of wine, from which they were making copious libations. The pilgrim stood and gazed at them in silence. Their dress was principally of a defensive nature, of thick leather, with a large cross on the breast and back. They were evidently part of the army of the crusaders on their return from Palestine. Their head-pieces were thrown aside on the grass, as well as their arms, and they were in the full enjoyment of resting from hard service, and finding themselves in an European climate once more. As the eye of the new comer ranged from the group before him to the tents and pennons of the camp, something appeared to have caught his sight, which startled and agitated him; for he suddenly turned round and attempted to avoid coming near by taking a different path. He was, however, too close upon the party to evade them in this way; two or

three of them sprung up, and intercepted his retreat.

“ Come, pilgrim, toss off a cup of wine with us in honour of our noble Duke and his fair bride !” The pilgrim made a sign of refusal.

“ Nay, none of your mortified looks here, we suffer no such sour faces among us—wilt trudge all the lighter for it presently. Come.” And they filled a drinking horn as they spoke. Still no answer.

“ Art thou under a vow not to drink ? nor yet to speak ?” An inclination of the head assented to both questions.

“ Pooh ! friend ; we have some jolly friars here will give thee absolution in no time, as well as the pope himself, so come, sit down without more words.

So saying, the two foremost took the pilgrim’s arm, to oblige him to join their festivity ; but that holy personage was not to be so easily managed.

“Off, you unmannered knaves,” cried he, as, suiting the action to the word, he sent them reeling against their comrades, with a force that overset the equilibrium of three or four of the party, as well as the great jar from which they had been carousing.

“Well done, man of peace! what next?” called out a short round man, with a well-tanned complexion. “Thou layest about thee as if we were Saracens. I would thou hadst not spilt the wine though.” But the rest were not in so philosophical a humour, and a simultaneous attack on the pilgrim followed. As his adversaries were, however, no match in their present condition for a man naturally active, skilled in all sorts of exercises, and perfectly sober, he would have been quickly able to make the retreat he wished, had not two squires of the marshal of the camp arrived at the scene of the scuffle, with orders for the whole to be in

marching order by dawn the next morning. The soldiers stood abashed for a moment; but the whole party soon found their speech, and as each gave a different account of the fray, the officials took the pilgrim into custody, who, being unarmed, saw he could not offer any effectual resistance.

One of the tents, though not much larger than the rest, was pitched in an open space apart from the others; the draperies of silk at its entrance were thrown back to admit the evening breeze, and shewed that the interior was furnished with every comfort and luxury that their intercourse with the East had taught the crusaders to engrift upon European habits. As the breath of a gentle air now and then raised the heavy folds of the banner which hung from its flagstaff, the gleam of the setting sun was reflected by the three golden lions, or leopards, which characterized the house of Normandy.

A group of several persons were seated at the entrance. The individual, to whom they all seemed to pay deference, was a man in the meridian of life, naturally of a fair complexion, as appeared by the upper part of his forehead and his neck, which were no longer covered by his heavy chain armour that lay in the background ; his frank and noble countenance was deeply sunburnt by his Syrian campaigns, and more than one scar was visible. Close to his side, the graceful outlines of a feminine figure made a pleasing contrast to the robust frame of her husband. It was Robert Duke of Normandy, one of the bravest and most distinguished military leaders of the armies of the western nations, who had so lately achieved the conquest of Jerusalem, and seated Godfrey de Bouillon on its throne. On his return home he had become acquainted with, and espoused, the beautiful Sibylla, daughter of the count of Con-

versana. Several months had now elapsed since their marriage; but Robert still forgot, in the society of his bride, and the charms of that delightful climate, that his paternal dukedom of Normandy was waiting for him to resume its government. At length, however, he had roused himself, and was actually on his journey,—a few more days, and Italy would be left behind. The marshal of the camp stood before him, and was detailing the line of march for the next day. There was a bustle among the tents, and a group made their appearance, with a man, in the dress of a pilgrim, led along unwillingly in the midst of them. The marshal hastened to meet them, and returned in a few moments to the Duke, laughing.

“ ‘Tis a warlike pilgrim, my Lord, who has been engaged in a fray with some of our drunken losel knaves, and they say he has shewn strength of arm like Bevis, or Guy of Warwick.”

“ Say you so, Sir Marshal,” replied the Duke, smiling in his turn, “ 'tis a pity he came not on his pilgrimage a year or two sooner to help us win back the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels. But let us hear what this doughty champion has to say for himself.”

The pilgrim was brought forward at a sign from Robert, and on his slouched hat being removed (which he resisted, as far as was in his power), the Duke recognised, to his great astonishment, though altered by the marks of deep emotion, and a beard of a month's growth, the features of Sir Walter Tyrrel.

“ Ha ! Sir Walter Tyrrel, King William's dearest and best friend ! But how ! What does this dress mean ? and why art thou here ? How fares my royal brother of England ?”

Tyrrel's face first flushed crimson, then turned death-like pale ; he pressed his hand tightly over his eyes, but could not answer.

Robert of Normandy looked at him with good-humoured surprise.

“ Why, Sir Walter, how is this? A moment since we heard of doughty deeds of arms, and now you seem scarcely able to stand. Art thou ill, man? The best cure for a pilgrim will be a flask of Sicilian wine.”

“ Shall we not send for a learned leech?” interposed the gentle voice of the Lady Sibylla, in a tone of compassion.

All waited for an answer.

“ My Liege! I pray you pardon me,” said Tyrrel, making a strong effort, but without raising his face to meet the other’s gaze. “ I may not speak, save a few necessary words; I may not taste wine; I may not tarry on my way to the Holy Sepulchre. A fatal, an involuntary crime calls for expiation,” he added, with a shudder.

Duke Robert looked at him in silence, but

restrained himself from any further question. His bride cast down her dark eyes, and sighed.

“But you will be my honoured guest for the night?” asked the former.

The pilgrim shook his head.

“Nay, Sir Knight, this is scarcely courteous,” continued the Duke, “after so long an absence. I would fain hear news of England and Normandy.”

Tyrrel only replied by pointing to the cross on his habit, and then in the direction of Palestine.

“And yet, for my brother’s sake, I would not part in this manner,” said Robert, somewhat vexed; “you are his nearest and most familiar friend, and well deservest that name.”

A convulsive shudder passed through Sir Walter’s frame,—“I may not, I cannot, speak further to your Grace;”—and he took his departure with hasty steps; but before he had

gone more than a few yards, he stopped, returned, and, with a deep obeisance, kissed the hands of Robert and his fair bride. The next moment, before they could recover from their surprise at his action, his tall figure was already lost to their sight among the tents.

All present looked at each other, without speaking, for some little time.

“ His brain is turned,” said the Duke.

“ Shall we send in pursuit of him?” asked two or three knights at once.

Robert hesitated for a moment, then said, “ No,—let him pursue his pilgrimage; far be it from me to detain any one from so pious and meritorious a journey.”

The sun was now below the horizon, and a negro page, in a glittering dress, came to apprise his mistress that the evening repast, answering to our supper, or rather dinner, was ready.

The strange conduct and demeanour of the pilgrim excited wonder in the minds of all the party, which found its vent in various confused remarks and suggestions, but the greater number repeated, parrot-like, after the Duke, “ His brain is certainly turned.”

Scarcely had the first morsel passed their lips, when two or three knights came hastily to the tent, and announced that messengers were just arrived from the chancellor of Normandy, with news of the greatest import.

They were admitted to the Duke’s presence instantly, and told him, in a few words, the events, which the reader has already had detailed to him, accompanying the death of Rufus.

“ How ! My brother dead ! Red William gone ! ” cried the Duke. “ Then I am King and Lord of broad England, with her brave nobles and stout archers.”

“ Pardon, me, noble Prince,” returned one

of the messengers, “your brother Henry has seized the royal treasures, gained over the barons, and was crowned at Westminster three days after the late King’s death.”

“Now by the holy grave at Jerusalem ! this is too much,” cried Robert, starting up, and striking his hand on the board, so that everything clattered and tottered. “False, false traitor !” he continued, striding up and down in great excitement. “Who could have imagined a *brother* would be so disloyal—with that fair smooth face of his and that ever-ready smile. Sibylla ! thou art pale. Be calm, love ; thou shalt see that I can be calm.”

With these words he re-seated himself, and bending his gaze full on the messengers, he mastered himself so as to appear composed, and ordered them to relate more fully how the King met his death. Robert listened patiently till the catastrophe. Among the various rumours, the

messengers unfortunately mentioned some circumstances which threw strong suspicions of unfair play on Tyrrel, which his sudden flight seemed to justify.

The Duke's anger boiled up again, and the veins on his forehead became visibly swollen ; but this time he was able to restrain himself. He passed his broad hand through his short curling hair, as customary with him when strongly excited.

“ Send for Sir Hugues Le Noir, our camp marshal,” was all that he spoke, and even that in a rather low tone.

No one ventured to break the silence that followed, till the arrival of the knight marshal.

“ Sir Hugues,” said Robert, as the former stood before him, in some surprise at the unusual summons he had so hastily received,—“ take with you two or three lances and a score of bowmen ; follow the road Sir Walter Tyrrel has taken.

“ That we can hardly do,” observed the knight, “ especially as you gave orders not to molest him,—we know not the direction he has taken.”

“ Bring him here, dead or alive,” was the stern answer ; “ my brother’s blood is on his hands ; and the moment you return, let the tents be struck, and the sumpter mules loaded ; we push on for Normandy and England with all haste. See to it, Sir Hugues, for I shall have to win my own dominions back with the sword, after having created and conquered a new throne for Godfrey de Bouillon.”

The marshal bowed in mute surprise, and withdrew.

“ Sibylla ! I always said that fair brow was fitted to wear a crown !”

N O T E S.

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Westminster Hall.

Westminster Hall was in fact built by Rufus, as described ; but it was completed a few years before his death. Vast as its dimensions are, it did not come up to the ideas of the King, who commanded a larger hall to be constructed closer to the river side, which was in progress at the time of his death. Stowe, the historian, says that in his time the foundations of this projected building were still visible occasionally at low water.

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Deaths of the Princes of the Conqueror's Family in the New Forest.

De Courtois, or Courthose, whose Christian name is also variously given, a brother of Rufus, is believed also to have met his fate in the New Forest. According to the chroni-

cles, he was killed by a pestilential blast, in hunting. It is said that the West Indian fever is often embodied in something like a fog or vapour, and those who have the misfortune to find themselves within its sphere seldom escape the malignant influence. When this tract of country abounded more with swamp and underwood, it might very possibly be subject to a similar evil.

Grafton, also, in his Chronicle, affirms, "In the same forest, by a like chance, was slaine also, a little before, Richard, sonne unto Robert Duke of Normandy, by a knight of his owne." Camden, however, assigns him a different name—viz., Henry—and a different catastrophe, somewhat resembling that of Absalom.

Page 216.

The dream of the monk, and his reception by the King, is narrated by Matthew Paris precisely as here mentioned. It is also recorded that Tyrrel actually held the office of bow-bearer, and the scene of Rufus' death is no fictitious description. There are of course no longer any remains of the church or chapel demolished by the Conqueror, and the memorable oak-tree has also yielded to the effects of time, but its place is supplied by a three-sided stone, on which are the following inscriptions:—

1st side.—"Here stood the oak-tree, on which an arrow, shot by Sir Walter Tyrrel at a stag, glanced, and struck King William II., surnamed Rufus, in the breast, of which stroke he instantly died, on the 2nd August, 1100."

2nd side.—“ King William II. being thus slain, was laid on a cart belonging to one Purkess, and drawn from hence to Winchester, and buried in the cathedral church of that city.”

3rd side.—“ That the spot where an event so memorable happened might not hereafter be unknown, this stone was set up by John Lord Delaware, who has seen the tree growing in this place.”

An addition to the inscription notices a visit of George III. to the spot.

END OF VOL. I.



HISTORICAL TALES



THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES.



HISTORICAL TALES

OF

THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES.

"The history of those remote times seems almost a romance,
and the romance of those times is closely allied to history."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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SIR WALTER TYRREL.

A NORMAN STORY.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAMP.

“ For England, ho!—the canvass swells,
Their vessel cleaves the salt-sea foam;
Each beaming visage silent tells
How dear to each their island-home.”

KING HENRY paced uneasily up and down. The first days of spring had began to enliven all creation, but the cheerfulness of the external world enhanced his unpleasant feelings by its contrast with the perturbation which reigned in his breast. He had, on his accession, granted a charter to England, with what seemed ample

security for the liberties of the nation. Various odious feudal rights were mitigated or suppressed, concessions made to the barons, and copies of the charter sent to the libraries of most of the principal abbeys in the kingdom. He was sensible that his usurped crown was not the most secure possible, and therefore courted popularity by this step. He had also espoused Matilda, the nearest heiress to the crown of the line of the Saxon blood royal, to which the people were still strongly attached. There was also a powerful and influential body to be gained over—the clergy.* They eagerly embraced the alliance of his interests with their own, as, with their usual cunning and foresight, they perceived that

* Henry, in after years, discovered that his clerical allies had made too good terms for themselves; but it was too late to displace them by force. He tried, with little success, to foil them at their own weapons—intrigue, cunning, and eloquence, of which he was fully master; so much so as to excite the admiration of Pope Calixtus, in some interviews with that pontiff.

they should be enabled to make him purchase their support by concessions to their views and projects, and increase of sacerdotal power; and even in case he should be unable to maintain himself on the throne, still their privileges, once granted, could not be easily revoked by any subsequent monarch. Anselm, the archbishop of Canterbury, was recalled from banishment, and great court was paid to him, which he returned by zealous support of Henry's cause. Every precaution human prudence and subtlety could suggest had been taken, yet at that moment the whole edifice of usurpation and ambition seemed tottering to its fall. Robert of Normandy had arrived in, and taken possession of, his hereditary duchy, but too late in the autumn to make any attempt upon England. With the earliest spring, however; he had set sail from Havre, accompanied by a large body of men, and had actually landed at Ports-

mouth, near which town his camp was established. He was bold, brave, and generous, almost adored by his soldiers and followers, (who sometimes, however, took advantage of his good-humoured, easy temper.) But what caused his brother the most serious apprehensions was, that a fleet, fitted out to prevent his landing in England, had mutinied, and declared for their legitimate liege lord, returning with him triumphantly to Portsmouth. Nor was this all that chafed the King. A number of the noblest and most influential barons supported Robert, either openly or secretly. It required all his talents, skill, and prudence, to know what to decide upon in these difficult circumstances. He had assembled what army he could, and the hostile forces lay, almost in sight of each other, on the southern coasts of Hampshire.

A small party presented themselves one morning, at this juncture, at one of the out-

posts of Duke Robert's camp ; two of the individuals that composed it were females, and mounted on low rough horses of the country. Their dress was of coarse russet and gray home-spun cloth, (such as the wives and daughters of the franklins and villeins usually wore.) One of them had her riding-hood drawn so completely over her face as to conceal her features ; but a delicate white hand, which now and then accidentally became visible, betrayed that its owner belonged to a superior class. Small leatheren bags, which might contain wearing apparel, &c., were fastened on each of the animals. Their male companion was a strong-built man, well capable, apparently, of becoming an efficient protector in time of need, and seemed, by his appearance, as well as the fact of his being well armed, a servitor of some noble house. As they drew near the sentry, the female referred to drew herself up with a sigh, as if a weight had been taken from her breast.

The sentry advanced two steps, and demanded the password.

This seemed an unexpected difficulty to the travellers, for they looked at each other with evident embarrassment.

“ We come from a distance to claim the protection of our liege lord, Robert of Normandy, who should be King of England,” said the man, after some time.

“ May be so,” said the sentry. “ Without the password you are our prisoners, as spies, or who knows what.”

As he spake, a whistle was heard, and a dozen men-at-arms surrounded them in a moment; the man tried to draw his short sword, but found his arms pinioned from behind.

Lady Adela,—for the reader will have conjectured who it was,—preserved her composure with considerable courage, and demanded to be conducted at once to Duke Robert and the Lady Sibylla.

“ Ay, mistress !” said one of the men with a laugh, “ with a footcloth to walk on, I trow. Such as you must be taken to the deputy marshal, to give an account of themselves first.”

“ Fellow ! use more respect to my Lady in your speech,” interrupted the servitor, for which he gained nothing but a jeer in return.

“ Lady, indeed ! room for my lady in the russet kirtle; quotha ?”

A laugh from the soldiery followed this sally ; but it must in justice be said that the men-at-arms conducted her to the marshal’s tent without any further personal insult, or touching the baggage belonging to her. Fortunately, the knight was well acquainted with her name, which, when announced, procured her all the deference she could desire ; he immediately resigned to her use the whole of his tent, that she might change her russet disguise for a dress more becoming her rank, whilst he went to

acquaint Robert with her arrival, and to request an audience for her of the Lady Sibylla.

The daughter of the Count of Conversana was seated in one of the capacious tents which her husband had won, as the spoils of war, from the Saracens, and it was accordingly as commodious as a temporary abode of that sort could be rendered. Robert had, indeed, wished her to remain in Normandy; but, with true woman's affection, she had insisted on sharing his dangers, and the anticipated triumph, notwithstanding her recent confinement. Her son, a few months old, lay in the lap of one of her attendants, the rest of whom, as well as their mistress, were employed in the labours of the needle, according to the custom of the age. As Adela entered the tent, the Lady Sibylla rose for a moment to return the obeisance of her visitor, and immediately re-seated herself. Each looked with some curiosity on the personal

beauty of the other, of which she had heard such praises.

And beautiful they each were, though in different styles. The Italian's hair and eyes were dark as night, with a glance that seemed at times to have power to command all men to prostrate themselves, and do homage to her dazzling and imperial beauty. Her robe of white samite fell in loose folds to her feet, and was surmounted by a voluminous drapery of deep orange, with a narrow border of silver, and lined throughout with ermine. Yet she could not boast of the brilliant transparency of complexion which made every shade of emotion visible through the delicate skin of Adela, whose soft blue eyes and rich brown hair would have appeared preferable in the sight of some to the more commanding and imposing demeanour of the Duchess.

The Anglo-Norman heiress bent one knee as

she raised the hand of Sibylla to her lips, and asked her to grant a boon. Though the latter, in the present uncertain state of her fortunes, had, as well as her husband, the good taste not yet to assume the royal titles and state, yet the homage paid to her as Queen was received by her with an easy, quiet dignity, as she answered—

“Rise, fair lady, and be seated; we wear no crown as yet, though both my husband and myself will be ever ready to hear and assist, as far as lies in our power, those who come as suppliants.”

“I trust in the justice and generosity of your noble husband,” said Adela, “to grant me the boon I am about to ask.”

Sibylla placed herself in an attitude of attention, and the former continued—

“My request, Lady, is simple, and easily granted. It is this:—that I may, under your protection, cross the seas, and enter a convent

in Normandy, to devote the rest of my days to religion."

"To enter a cloister!" said the Princess, with some surprise,—"is that your wish? Think again, fair lady; make no hasty resolves; 'twere pity to bury yourself alive!"

"My resolution is taken already," was the answer, accompanied with a deep sigh. "As a ward of the King's, my hand was, by feudal custom, under his absolute control, to bestow on whom he should please. The new charter of Henry has resigned that privilege, so often abused; yet, now he is the first to break it, and has threatened and commanded me to accept of one of the most rude and violent of his barons, who, unfortunately, has demanded my hand as the price of his allegiance, having seen me accidentally unveiled at Winchester."

"Stay then with us,—at least, for the present. You shall be near my own person, as a friend

and a sister; and hereafter you shall be free to make a choice among any of the brave and loyal hearts who surround Robert with their faithful bosoms and swords."

" Speak not of that, Madam, I entreat; earthly love for mortal I never can feel again. I am the bride of Heaven from henceforth."

" Then you have loved?" observed Sybilla, in a half-doubting tone, fearful of paining her guest.

" I pray you, Lady, of your kindness to grant me my boon," said Adela, with clasped hands and a pale face, as she once more placed herself in the position of supplication before the Princess.

At this moment, the drapery was lifted by a hasty hand, and Robert himself strode in, with clenched teeth, and a flush of displeasure upon his brow.

" What thinkest thou, my Sibylla!" cried he,

as he threw himself into a seat,—“ that traitorous brother of mine has had the assurance to send messengers to treat for the surrender of my rights ! Mort de ma vie ! I have not crossed the seas for nothing ; and that Beauclerk shall find to his cost.”

“ And the messengers ?” asked she, as she leant on her husband’s shoulder, having risen on his entrance from her seat.

“ The messengers ! I sent them back as they came ; which was a better treatment than they deserved,” answered Robert. As he spoke, his eye fell upon Adela, who stood before them, with a look of surprise and inquiry.

Sibylla hastened to explain ; and repeated to him what she had heard from her fair suitor.

“ A pretty fellow this to speak of treaties,” said the Duke, “ when he keeps not his own charter a month. But you shall find us all true knights here, Lady,” addressing Adela,—“ no

fraud or compulsion in *my* camp. Beshrew me, though ! that face was never meant to be shut up in a damp cloister, among sour old devotees. An' if I had not made a vow to be true to my lady love, I would try myself to make you change your pious resolutions."

" For our Lady's sake ! jest not on that point with me, my Liege, I pray you."

" I were a brute if I did aught to pain a woman who asks my protection," replied Robert, taking one of her white hands, and respectfully kissing it, for he saw evidently that her eyes glistening in moisture, and melancholy tone of voice, were the result of real emotion, and that she was suffering real distress of mind from some unknown cause. The kindness she experienced from the Lady Sibylla seemed to touch her, and she expressed herself in terms of the warmest gratitude for the protection offered her. Every proposal of attaching her to the

suite of the Princess, however, was met with a quiet, but determined refusal ; and she begged, and was allowed to remain, in a great measure, alone, giving as a reason, that she wished to enter on the monastic life as soon as possible, and therefore, that she desired to bring her mind into a fit state of preparation. Her love for Tyrrel had been kept secret during the late King's life, as the reader knows, and the ambition of her aunt, disappointed in one point, had immediately hailed with eagerness the proposals which were made by the powerful Baron de Redvers for her hand, in consequence of his casual sight of her at Winchester. Sir Richard de Redvers was, like many of the nobility of those times, a rude, unpolished, semi-barbarian, without education or manners. He was brave, however, and possessed of wealth and influence, so that her aunt became outrageous at the unparalleled absurdity and insubordination, as she

considered it, of Adela's refusal of a man who only coveted her possession as he would that of any horse or falcon that happened to suit his fancy. Her inclinations, however, it seemed, were not to be consulted, and her aversion for her proposed suitor was treated on all hands as the mere caprice of a petted and spoiled child. At this juncture, Adela heard, from what she believed an authentic source, that Tyrrel had perished in Italy. There was now no hope for her, and she formed the resolution of entering a convent. The landing of Robert in England, with his widely-spread reputation for kind-hearted generosity, seemed to offer a favourable opportunity of escaping from the power of Henry, whose consent to this step it was useless to hope for. She had accordingly taken, as we have seen, the somewhat hazardous expedient of disguising herself, and seeking the camp of the aspirant to the crown.

We must, however, now turn our attention to another quarter—the camp of Henry Beauclerk, near Winchester. Suspicion and distrust agitated the mind of that sovereign, and he omitted no means he could think of to secure the fidelity of the soldiery; even Anselm, the primate, rode himself through the ranks, recommended to them the defence of their Prince, represented the duty of keeping their oaths of allegiance, and prognosticated the greatest happiness from the government of so wise and just a sovereign.

“They come at last,” cried the King, as he galloped down from a small eminence covered with trees, where he had been sitting on horseback, for upwards of an hour, anxiously watching the road in the direction of Portsmouth, in order to catch the first sight of the messengers whom he had dispatched to the camp of his brother that day. They were indeed now discernible,

as they pursued the turnings and windings of the path ; but it took a considerable time before the result could be learned, for they approached with a funereal slowness, that ill accorded with Henry's impatience, and gloomy were the countenances that he beheld, as he drew his rein on meeting them. In the midst, the portly form and round cheeks of the prior of Winchester were conspicuous ; the corners of that dignitary's mouth were drawn down with a woful expression, and he fidgetted uneasily in his saddle, but neither he nor either of his companions were willing to be the first to announce the failure of their mission.

“ How now ! How sped you on your errand, Sir Prior ? What news from the camp of Robert ? ” asked the King.

The prior looked at the heralds and knights who had accompanied him, and they returned his look with still longer faces than his own.

“ You have failed then ? Is it not so ? Answer me.”

To this interrogation the prior at last answered, in a doleful voice,—

“ Alas ! there is no peace. Duke Robert would not even hear the oration I had so carefully prepared on the excellences of brotherly love. Lo, when I spoke to them of peace, they made them ready for battle. ‘ Cum his qui oderunt pacem,’ as the Psalmist hath it.”

Henry bit his lip, and drew the bridle tighter, as he turned his horse round to return with them.

“ And how did my brother heed the proposals ?”

“ He treated us with no more respect than I would shew to as many Saxon churls,” answered the prior. “ It was most fortunate I took a manchet of white bread and a cup of ale in the morning ; for he offered us not so much as

an oat cake, though we had ridden near ten miles, no, nor anything softer than a wooden stool to sit down on, and although fasting——”

“The answer, Sir Priest,—what said he ?” interrupted Henry.

“ My Liege ! the Duke gave us no answer but this,—That he came to fight, and not to treat ; but if your Grace would give up the crown, he would use you as one brother should another.”

The King smiled bitterly, for a moment, and then rode on in gloomy silence ; but before they reached the camp they were met by Sir Richard de Redvers, in great wrath at the escape of Adela, whom he had considered his unresisting prey, and loud were the taunts and accusations of foul play and connivance at her flight which he heaped on Henry’s head. The latter, though in no very placable mood, restrained his temper at Redvers’s threat of following the example of the Earl of Cornwall

and Sir Robert de Mallet, who had the day before left Henry's camp and gone over to the Duke of Normandy. In the heat of the altercation, the prior of Winchester observed, that he heard the lady had found refuge with Robert's consort, the Lady Sibylla. The King protested, and with truth, that he had hitherto been ignorant, not only of her place of retreat, but even of her escaping,—and among these bickerings and dissensions, they reached the royal tents.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONFERENCE.

“Therefore, thy threat’ning colours now wind up,
And tame the savage spirit of wild war,
That, like a lion fostered up at hand,
It may lie gently at the foot of peace,
And be no further harmful than in show.”

KING JOHN, ACT V. SCENE I.

THE forces of Robert of Normandy had encamped on the smooth turf which clothes, like a verdant carpet, the ridge of chalk hill, whose acclivities rise from the low fertile lands immediately adjoining the Portsmouth coast and islands. The eye of the spectator ranges from its summit over the woodland country on the north, nearly to Winchester ; and on the oppo-

site side, a long range of rich cornfields, diversified with trees, and intersected by numerous creeks and arms of the sea, along the coast of Hampshire and Sussex, forms one of the most pleasing, as well as extensive, prospects of which that southern part of England can boast. The Lady Sibylla sighed, as she contemplated the scene, leaning on Adela's arm ; for the trees had now put on their summer foliage, and the clear bright sunshine brought to her recollection her native Italian sky, as she gazed on the blue hills and rocky cliffs of the Isle of Wight that lay extended before her. Few words passed between them ; for a gloomy presentiment weighed upon the spirits of the beautiful Southern, and the thoughts of what might be her future lot in the land where her presence and her husband's seemed to have but brought the fierce spirit of discord and civil war.

They had wandered a few hundred yards

from the tents in this silent companionship, when their attention was suddenly arrested by an unusual bustle and stir on the outskirts of the camp, and the notes of a horn, which announced the arrival of some distinguished personages. The cavalcade, which slowly wound its way up the north side of the hill, was unarmed, and composed of not more than a dozen individuals. Among the grim mustachioed barons, with their bright coloured tunics surmounting the chain armour, which fitted closely to the limbs, was visible, forming a strong contrast, the pale, closely-shaven face and head of a chaplain, whose white surplice fluttered in the breeze, supporting a tall silver cross. Immediately behind him rode a man whose thin and mortified countenance was lighted up by two eyes, the penetrating and somewhat worldly expression of which seemed inconsistent with the sanctified and severe tone of the rest of his features. His

dress was a plain cassock of coarse purple cloth, and no emblem of his dignity was visible, save the large episcopal ring on his right hand. As he entered the lines, every steel covered head was bowed, and both knights and soldiers bent the knee to Anselm of Canterbury, whose zeal for the advancement and privileges of the clerical order had caused the priests, and the sanctity and austerity of his life the laity, to regard him as one deserving the honour of canonization.* The archbishop distributed benedictions with uplifted hand, as he slowly passed on, without unclosing his lips or altering a muscle of his countenance, to the tent where the Duke of Normandy was seated in council with the Earls of Shrewsbury and Lancaster, Montgomery, De Warene, and other powerful barons who had espoused his cause. Their war and weather-

* He was, in fact, afterwards enrolled among the saints of the Roman calendar.

beaten countenances were all that was visible under their conical steel helmets, from which the flexible chain-mail depended, covering their necks, clinging close to, and displaying the forms of every muscle of, the arms and legs. Amongst them sat the bishop of Durham, the ex-chancellor of England, who had made his escape from the Tower, where he had been confined since King Henry's accession, in order to join the standard of the claimant to the throne. A slight inclination of each head paid the customary tribute to the sanctity and exalted station of the primate, as he entered the tent, after which one might have supposed them an assemblage of sculptured effigies in marble, so silent and stern were their looks, as they waited for Anselm to open the conference.

“ Robert of Normandy,” he began, at length, “ I come, as an humble messenger of peace, to entreat that, all stubbornness and hardness of

heart being laid aside, thou wouldest pause, and reflect what thy ill-advised and ambitious projects will cause of misery and civil war. Alas ! that a Christian priest should be obliged to remind a brother of the love and affection due to him who was born of the same parents, and suckled with the same milk as himself. Is not the peaceable possession of Normandy sufficient for thee, with its fair orchards and rivers, its noble castles and woods ? Why molest a pious and generous prince, who has been chosen and elected as their king by the voice of the barons and people ? ”

“ And to whom did that crown belong of right, as well as assured by the most solemn treaties, but to this noble Duke, the eldest son of the Conqueror ? ” asked the bishop of Durham, no longer able to endure the primate’s harangue.

“ Ralph of Durham ! thou art no fit coun-

sellor in this matter," returned the archbishop, fixing his keen grey eye on the other's countenance. "I know thee for one of those unworthy churchmen who sinfully neglect the functions of their high and holy office to pay court to the great ones of the world, covetous of secular employments, wealth, and power."

"Sir Duke," he continued, turning to Robert, "I am furnished with power to make every offer of money in the way of arrangement that thou canst desire from the munificence of a King and the affectionate kindness of a brother's heart."

Robert stood up, and drew his long two-handled sword from its scabbard, and struck its point upon the footstool which stood before him. Anselm made a slight gesture of nervousness.

"My Lord of Canterbury," said he, "I reverence your sanctity and your office; yet mark me,—this good sword has been dyed a hundred

times in the life-blood of the infidels; and by God's blessing, and our Lady's, it shall again win a throne for its master, in spite of those traitors who have usurped his rights."

A low murmur of approbation ran round the circle, but Anselm, unmoved, stepped into the midst, and confronted the Duke.

"And art thou not ashamed, as a soldier of the cross, to draw that so hallowed weapon for the purposes of thy worldly ambition alone! and that not against pagans or followers of Mahound, but against men who hold the same faith, breathe the same native air, and speak the same language, as ourselves;—and against a brother, who is, on his part, ready to join hands in friendship and peace, forgetting and forgiving all that is past!"

At the first part of these words Robert seemed to waver, and cast down his eyes; but the mention of his brother's friendly disposition

caused his upper lip to curl with a bitter smile, which his moustache rendered almost indistinguishable.

The primate grasped Robert's mailed wrist, and led him to the entrance. All made way for them to pass, as Anselm pointed out the smiling landscape that lay spread out beneath like a panorama.

“Behold this fair and Christian land,” said he, “the land of thy father and of thy brothers ! Canst thou bear to lay waste the hopes of the husbandman, and destroy with the hoof of the blood-stained war-horse the produce of the earth ? How many English widows and orphans will that sword render desolate ! and how many of those homesteads and rural steeples among the trees will be laid in smoking ruins, amidst the wailings and shrieks of the unfortunates who once worshipped and dwelt in security there !”

Robert's heart swelled, and a choking sensation made itself felt in his throat; he looked round irresolutely at his counsellors, who still sat as immovable as before. The archbishop saw his advantage, and represented in such forcible terms the miseries of a civil war, that his auditor consented to treat for peace at the end of the interview.

Sibylla had advanced towards the tent of conference, on seeing her husband with the primate appear at its entrance, naturally supposing the affair was at an end. She had listened to the appeal of Henry's ambassador with attention, and as Robert raised his eyes, they met her's, glistening with feminine compassion—it was enough.

The next day fresh commissioners arrived, and among them the prior of Winchester, who this time was not disappointed of a soft cushion and a suitable refection after his ride. The preliminaries of a treaty were arranged, after

employing some negotiation, and it was agreed that Robert should resign his pretensions to England, receiving, as a compensation, the sum of three thousand marks, to be paid annually, at a regular day, for a pension. If either of the princes died without issue, it was agreed that his brother should succeed to his dominions. The barons who negotiated further caused it to be agreed on, that the adherents of each should be pardoned and restored to all their possessions, either in Normandy or England; finally, that neither Robert nor Henry should thenceforth encourage, receive, or protect, the enemies of the other.

The bells of St. Swithin's rung out a joyful peal, which was taken up and continued by the steeples of the other churches in the city of Winchester. The streets were decked with tapestry, green boughs, and garlands of flowers, as the procession passed along. Robert and

Henry rode side by side, the Duke on a bright bay Arabian, of the purest breed of the Desert, which he had won in battle from a Saracen emir, whom he slew with his own hand, and Henry on a jet-black charger, whose glossy skin was flecked with drops of foam, that flew from his mouth as he champed the bit and chafed at the slow pace he was compelled to move at. The multitude cheered the brothers as they passed on,—Robert, without a shadow on his noble, open countenance, receiving with a frank smile the civilities and compliments with which the English monarch overwhelmed him. The Queen and the Lady Sibylla followed, on white palfreys, richly caparisoned; and often the gentle bride of Henry, who had but just been drawn from the seclusion of a convent, looked round with a timid expression of wonder at her beautiful and dignified sister-in-law, to whom pageants and shouting multitudes were less of a

novelty. The clergy, in their glittering robes, with incense shedding its perfume round them, received the cortège at the great door of the cathedral, conducting the princes up to the high altar. On each side of the steps were ranged twelve earls and barons, chosen from the bravest of the nobility of England and Normandy, in complete armour, save their heads and right hands. The conditions of the above-mentioned treaty were then distinctly rehearsed, which Robert and Henry, and after them the twenty-four barons successively, swore solemnly to observe, and cause to be observed, touching with their hands the relics upon the altar. Anselm of Canterbury stepped forth, with the jewelled mitre sparkling upon his brow, and, signing the cross over the kneeling princes, chanted the first verse of *Te Deum Laudamus*, and the holy canticle of thanksgiving was taken up by the multitude, who crowded every nook

and corner of the vast building, like the voice of the mighty ocean.*

After the church ceremonies were at an end, and the doors of the cathedral had poured out the stream of human beings who had crowded to witness the confirmation of peace, the rest of the day and those following were devoted to feasts, shows, and hawking-parties; and it is recorded, that the ecclesiastical dignitaries—especially our old acquaintance the prior—did full honour to the good cheer provided at the royal tables. The Baron de Redvers was moody and discontented that day. He had been one of the twelve chosen by Henry to take the oaths with him; and as the two princes had entered the church, his eyes had eagerly wandered to where the Queen took her seat with the consort of Robert and other ladies; but

* These circumstances and the conditions of the treaty are historical.

though many a bright eye returned his glance, and many a graceful form was there bending in devotion, he looked in vain for the heiress of Mortaigne. Nor yet at the feast, or in the gay pageants that followed, were his researches more successful,—till he at last heard, accidentally, the Earl of Lancaster question the Lady Sibylla if she knew of the fate of Sir Walter Tyrrel. “ He is dead !” answered the Duchess. “ Sir Hugues le Noir pursued him in Italy, by my husband’s commands, overtaking him at the door of a hermitage, where he took sanctuary, but fell, mortally wounded, at the steps of the altar. I cannot but think,” continued she, “ that his fate has had some influence in determining that beautiful creature you saw in my tent to bury herself in a Norman convent, where she is already arrived, probably. The mention of his name produced an effect on her she could not conceal.”

“A forfeit, Sir Knight!” cried out the jester, or professional fool of Henry’s court, holding up a mirror to his face; “you have encroached on my privileges by that solemn, grim look about nothing, like a hen brooding over an addled egg.”

The baron darted a scowl on the jester, which would have utterly annihilated him, if looks had power to execute what they threaten; and turning on his heel stalked off to the other end of the hall, followed by the fool, with his countenance screwed up into a grotesque likeness of De Redvers, and mimicking his haughty step.

The feast of Pentecost was come and gone. Months passed away in festivity, till the approach of Michaelmas warned Robert that it was time to cross the sea to his duchy. He accordingly took leave of his brother and the

Queen, with renewed assurances of the most cordial friendship from Henry, which were responded to with more sincerity (as afterwards appeared) on the part of Robert, than they were founded upon in his brother's mind. Many rich and costly gifts were interchanged between them, and on the day of departure Henry presented his brother with a cast of noble Norwegian falcons.

As Robert stood regarding the birds with delight, the jester approached, and bending on one knee, besought the Duke, with great solemnity, to accept of a gift from him also. This was his cap and bauble, which he gravely assured the Prince were well worthy his acceptance; and, added the jester, "you will find them far lighter and pleasanter wear than uncle Henry's crown and sceptre." Robert laughed with his usual light-heartedness; but the King coloured with anger, and though he forgave the

fool, at his brother's intercession, for the moment, yet he took the first opportunity to disgrace his poor jester, and replace him with another, who had either less wit, or having more, knew better how, and upon whom, to make an exercise of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NUNNERY.

“ There is also a superstitious belief in manie places, that on All Hallowes even, they who doe tarrie in the churche porche at night, doe see the shadowes of all suche as die within that yeare’s space; but I passe over such vaine and idle discourses.”—OLD AUTHOR.

AUTUMN had returned once more; and the waters of the Seine, which lately rippled quietly along its course, were become turbid and muddy, and the river had risen high enough to wash the foundation walls of a lately-built convent which stood on its banks, between Rouen and Elbœuf. The inmates of that convent were busily engaged in preparing and decorating their chapel for the ensuing festival. It was the last day of

October, and the next morning was to witness the ceremony of a new sister taking the veil. The birth of that novice was distinguished—her dowry was ample. The archbishop had promised to officiate, and the recluses looked forward with all the eagerness of children to such an event in their dreary and monotonous life.

“And these beautiful tresses must fall tomorrow under the steel,” said sister Ada, with a sort of regret, as she assisted in binding them up.

“Even so,” returned the novice, with a faint smile.

“Yet it is almost a pity; those wreaths of pearl are so becoming.”

“And so is that carcanet; pray let us see it once more,” said a second nun.

Adela sat passively, while the recluses decked the victim with the ornaments she was to wear for the last time on the ensuing festival.

“ Fie, sisters ! I marvel at your trifling with these vain gauds and ornaments,” said old Angelina—a nun, whose withered face bore no slight resemblance to one of the dried apples so common in her native country — “ it would far better become you all to be telling your beads than looking at such idle vanities on the eve of a holy tide,” after she herself had been looking on, with great distaste, for some time.

“ Nay, good mother, blame them not,” said the Lady, sighing, as she replaced the ornaments in their casket ; “ they are, thou knowest, the price of some of my broad lands in England ; they are destined, too, for the decoration of the image of our holy patroness in future. And I shall have more content in laying them aside, than I ever could feel pleasure in wearing them, however rich and valuable.”

“ Ave Maria ! thou speakest piously and well, Lady,” returned the old nun. “ I would all

our sisters in the convent had as holy dispositions as thou. They are fonder of tittle tattle and blaming each other's faults than beseenis the brides of heaven."

As the good lady had now got on her favourite subject of finding fault with everything that was said or done by any other inmate of the house, it is not known how long her tongue might have continued to run on, had not the community been summoned to one of the many religious services of the day by the sound of their chapel bell.

Vespers were finished; and Adela sat at the window alone, looking out on the discoloured broad stream which rolled along before her. Thoughts of other days came over her, while her gaze was vacantly and unconsciously fixed on a little boat, which was laboriously and slowly urging its way against the current, at some distance down the river. The day was

closing, and a dull wind swept along the walls with a low melancholy sound. She compared her own destiny, mentally, to that little skiff. She had early lost her parents and protector, and scarcely had she begun to form to herself a dream of anticipated happiness, on finding that a mutual attachment existed between her and the accomplished young Norman to whom her affections were engaged, when the fierce admiration of Rufus (encouraged as it was by her vain, ill-judging relative) stepped between them, like one of those fearful insurmountable obstacles we encounter in a feverish dream. And his death had only changed one fatality for another. Tyrrel was stained with the blood of his sovereign and benefactor. Adela had, it was true, now learnt all the particulars of the catastrophe, and that no guilt was attributable to her lover; yet he had fled, and after long months of miserable uncertainty, the crowning stone had been

laid to her sorrows, by the news that, on his way to the Holy Land, the unfortunate knight had been slain in the very act of taking sanctuary in a holy place. The pursuits of the Baron de Redvers had been her next persecution; and even now, in the retirement she had chosen for herself, the vexatious prattling and discontented sourness of those who were to be her future companions seemed about to dissipate her anticipations of a future tranquil, though melancholy, existence. She turned away from the window, and sought to soothe her uneasy thoughts by repeating the prescribed devotions before the little ivory crucifix which formed the only decoration of her cell.

It was not many minutes before the sound of some instrument mixed itself with the sighing of the wind; a few chords were struck, with no unskilful hand, and presently a masculine voice was distinctly heard, almost close to the window.

LAY OF THE PALMER.

Chill eddying breezes
Disperse the red leaves
Over woodland, and mountain, and plain ;
Hope cheers with her ray
The autumnal day
On the banks of my native Seine.

Adela started at the sounds, for the tune was one of the same that she had heard in happier times, when Tyrrel sung to her the lays and ballads of his native province ; and the voice was the same, but she was so firmly convinced that her lover had fallen a victim to the spears of Robert's followers, that a shudder came over her, as she listened and remembered the legendary belief alluded to in our motto.

Notwithstanding the superstitious dread, so common to that age, she felt herself impelled to approach the window, and beheld the little boat now within a few yards of the wall below her. It had drifted with the stream a short distance

down, but a few strokes of the oar brought it again, on Adela's appearance, as near as before ; while the song was continued thus :—

The Palmer returns
From a distant land,
Where the cross was raised on high,
At the tomb he knelt,
Deep penance felt
For a crime of a fatal dye.

Not shed by a foe,
Or in battle field,
Was the blood that his hands did stain ;
He would risk his life
In the mortal strife
To recal that shaft again !

He fled in all haste
With a loaded heart,
Full of grief, and remorse, and pain ;
As oilzied and free,
He returns to *thee*
And the banks of his native Seine.

Before the last stanza was finished, Adela was leaning half out of the casement to convince

herself that what she saw and heard was a reality. Tyrrel's voice was not to be mistaken, and though darkness was fast closing in, his features were still discernible. We leave to the imagination of such of our readers as are, or have been, lovers, to suggest the conversation which passed between them, in whispers, fearful of being overheard. The last words were spoken by Tyrrel, as his boat glided off towards Rouen. "An hour before dawn, to-morrow."

The next morning all was confusion and dismay. Adela's chamber was found vacant, and what was more, her wardrobe and casket of jewels had disappeared also, to the infinite horror and consternation of the whole sisterhood. Loud and general were the wailings, as the nuns hurried backwards and forwards, from chapel to refectory, and from parlour to cell; but the greatest misfortune that occurred was to Sister Angelina, who, in hurrying up a flight of stone

steps, fell forward, and lost by the fall her only two remaining teeth.

In the meantime, Walter and Adela had arrived in the ancient city of Rouen, and to the lady's great surprise, as their boat landed, they found two or three squires waiting, who received them with respectful deference, and took charge of the skiff. A large cloak was wrapped round her to prevent her conventional dress attracting observation from those who were already in the streets at that early hour, and Tyrrel conducted her through what seemed a perfect labyrinth of dark, narrow, and dirty lanes, where the houses, built principally of wood, five or six stories high, seemed to threaten every moment to fall on their heads. At length they stopped at the postern door of a large and lofty building, by which admission was given them into a spacious court with arched colonnades, in which were several persons with the ducal badges of

Normandy. Adela stopped and drew back, for she recognised the retainers of Robert, as they saluted them in passing. "Heavens ! Walter, where are you about to conduct me to?" A smile and a pressure of the hand was all the answer that Tyrrel gave her, as he hastened her steps to the interior of the building. Ascending a flight of stairs, they were ushered into an apartment, where Duke Robert and his consort had evidently been expecting their arrival.

The Lady Sibylla came forward and kindly welcomed her astonished guest.

"This is the second time I have had to receive you in your flight, fair runaway ! We shall not let you depart again so easily," said the beautiful Italian.

"Second thoughts are always the best," observed Robert, with a smile. "I presume you do not *now* insist upon wearing the veil for the rest

of your life, as you resolved to do in our camp of Portsmouth."

Adela blushed crimson as she stood in silent surprise; she looked from one to the other, and then at Tyrrel, who stood at her side, laughing, and enjoying her astonishment.

"And has he not told you the debt of gratitude we owe him, and which my husband scarcely knows how to repay?" inquired the Duchess.

Adela had scarcely time to reply in the negative, before the door again opened, and the reverend abbot of St. Ouen's was announced.

"I attend in consequence of your Grace's orders," said the abbot.

"Right, holy father," said Robert; "you are ready to pronounce the nuptial benediction over this fugitive nun and pilgrim?"

The abbot shook his head, with a grave smile; and Sibylla led the way to another apartment, in which Adela having changed her

dress of a novice for garments more suitable to the occasion, they all descended to the chapel, where the holy words were spoken, and the pilgrim received his bride from the hands of the Duke of Normandy.

And now the bridal feast was spread in the lofty hall, when Robert, who had the bride placed close to him at table, addressed Sir Walter Tyrrel,—“You have not yet fully told us what we all wish to hear, and especially my lovely neighbour,—that is, how you escaped from Sir Hugues le Noir, in Italy.”

Tyrrel bowed, and answered in these terms:—

“I left you, my Liege, after having paid homage to you and the Lady Sibylla, in a state of mind bordering on distraction; every word you had uttered cut me to the heart. It seems your knight marshal had some difficulty in

tracing my steps in the night, which soon came on, for it was not till the next day that they overtook me. I was descending the slope of a hill towards a small chapel of Our Ladye, which I saw at the bottom, with the door open, and a priest in his holy vestments about to perform mass, when I heard the tramp of horses and a shout behind me; I had nought but my pilgrim staff to defend myself with, and even then what could one man do against a dozen, well armed and mounted? I took up some large stones which lay there, and kept them at bay till I was within a few yards of the door. Two of the archers cut off my retreat; one of them fell, stunned by a blow of my staff, and I seized his weapon to defend myself. I nearly succeeded in attaining the steps of the sanctuary, when your lance, Sir Hugues, pierced my arm, and a heavy blow made my senses spin round as I rushed, with a last effort, into the chapel."

“ And there we left you for dead,” observed Sir Hugues, who sat near, “ but that old priest would not let us carry off your body.”

“ To that hermit I owe my life,” continued Tyrrel. “ On recovering my senses, I found myself carefully tended by him till the fever which seized me had abated, and I was in a fit state to travel again. From him I first heard the voice of consolation, for he assured me that my involuntary crime might be expiated by repentance without further journey to Palestine, but as my vow was made, it must be kept, (crossing himself.) Why should I make a long tale of it? I reached Jerusalem, knelt before the Holy Sepulchre, and returned, after a tedious, but perfectly safe journey, to my native land, where, I trust, my wanderings are at an end.”

“ And now for the history of that boar, whose head so lately smoked before us, and which the worthy abbot seems to have found so excellent.”

Tyrrel looked down, stammered, blushed, and begged the Duke to dispense with it.

“ Must I tell that tale, since the knight is too modest to speak in his own praise ? ” said the Lady Sibylla. Her husband nodded.

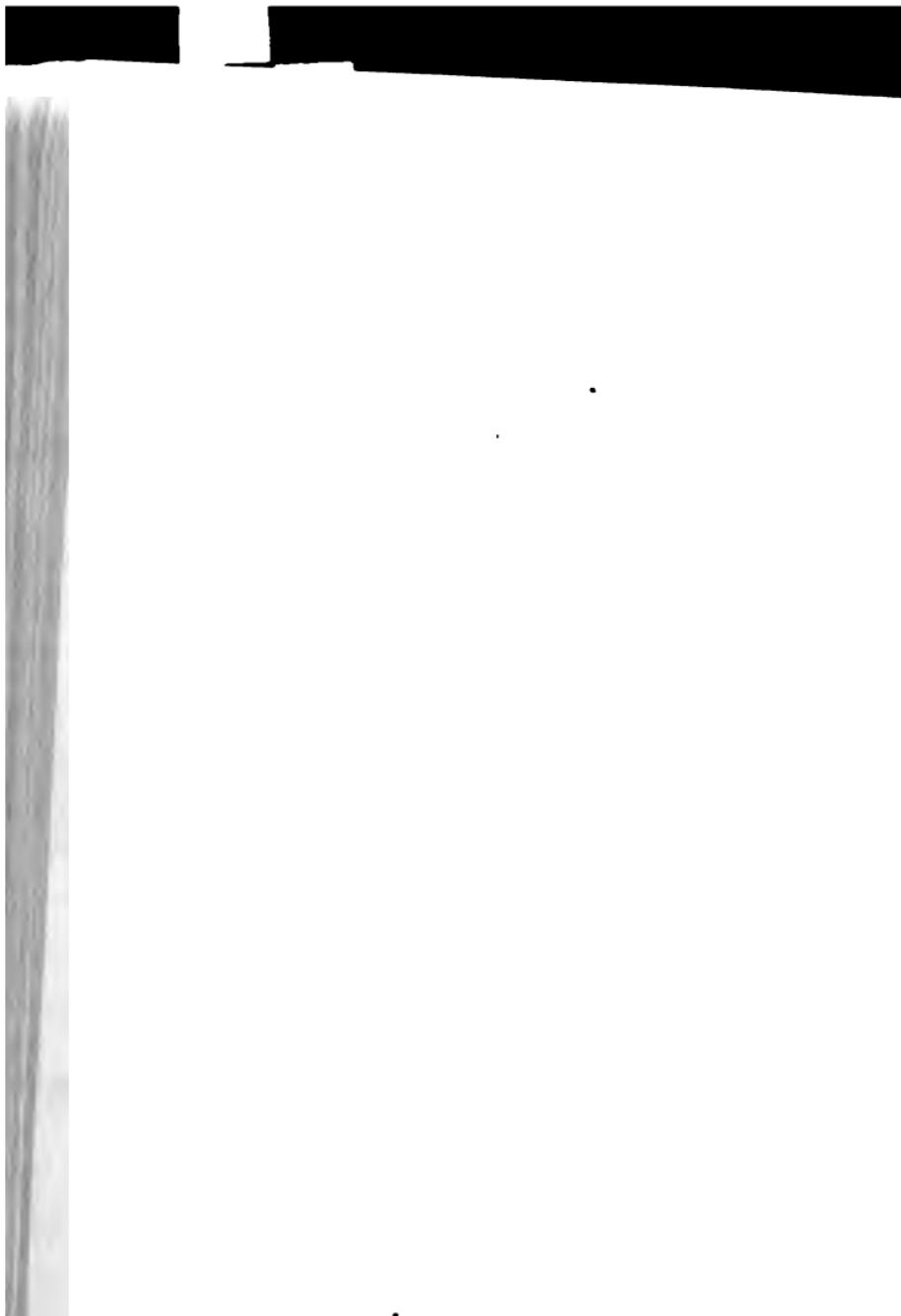
“ I was left behind in the chace in the forest of Evreux, as you pursued the game so ardently,” continued the Duchess, “ and to my great vexation was soon out of hearing of your horns and the cry of the hounds. After wandering for some time, we accidentally fell in with the pack, which had outstripped you all and brought the boar to bay at the foot of a large oak. There were but two squires with me, and the boar rushed furiously against us. On seeing it approach, one of my companion’s horses took fright and ran away with his rider through the trees ; the other was quickly disabled by the creature’s terrible tusks, and I was in the utmost danger of my life ; when suddenly a certain

palmer, who heard me scream, came up, mounted on the horse which had thrown his rider, and attacked my ferocious enemy. You arrived just in time to witness the death of the monster."

"And by the holy rood," returned Robert, "I never saw a woodsman kill a boar in better style, be he French or English, gentle or simple. We owed you the life of our consort, Sir Knight, and therefore it was but fair that we should present you with a bride in our turn this morning; and, moreover, we grant you the privilege of hunting and killing game throughout that forest, on condition of furnishing us with a boar's head every Christmas day."

The carcanet of jewels was not lost to the convent, for it was shortly after presented to the image of Our Lady, and continued to be part of her decorations (having been carefully hidden and preserved through the ravages of the wars

of the Huguenots, in the 16th century) till the year 1793, when it shared the fate of other valuables, and was afterwards seen on the neck of a woman, of the lowest class originally, whose husband had risen to be a general in the republican and Imperial army.



WILLIAM OF NORMANDY.

“I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror
Of good and bad, that make and unfold error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
To me, or my swift passage, that I slide
O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap.”

WINTER'S TALE, ACT IV. Time, as Chorus.

FOLLOWING the example of the mighty dramatist, and in conformity with the practice of many in the shoal of modern theatrical writers who think themselves entitled to take similar liberties regarding space and time, (to the great scandal and horror of those of the pure, classic, legiti-

mate, and sesquipedalian style of the French Theatre of Corneille and Racine,) we must now suppose, as our motto intimates, that eighteen years have passed by since the conclusion of the last story. It is nearly a third part of the usual duration of human life. How many changes and events, both of joy and sorrow, may have taken place during that period ; and yet, reader, if you have lived long enough to be able to carry your own recollections back for twenty years, I appeal to you, if, notwithstanding the events which may have occurred in the interval, it does not appear to have occupied a scarcely longer space than a few months, when circumstances occasionally recall things, persons, and places, with renewed and vivid distinctness, to your memory. How forcibly pleasure and pain renew themselves in the human mind in this manner !

But, nevertheless, the unvarying, irresistible

course of him of the scythe and hourglass continues, and urges us still to move on, forbidding us to linger and delay over these shadows of the past. Let us now fix our attention on the present, which, at the opening of the scene, is about the year 1119, and the 18th of the reign of King Henry I.

CHAPTER I.

THE CASTLE.

THE chilly December blasts, from the higher mountains in the interior of the county of Glamorgan, in South Wales, had now begun to sweep round the massive towers of the Castle of Cardiff, and the town which lay beneath on the banks of the river. In the distance, the waves of the Bristol Channel lay tranquil and dull under the leaden sky, whose horizon was faintly tinted with the redness of sunset; a few sea-gulls here and there flapped heavily along in sight of the windows, uttering, at intervals, their shrill and disagreeable cry. Even the vessels at the mouth of the river lay motionless,

as if under the influence of the general monotonous gloom which extended over the whole.

A man about thirty, dressed in the usual half-military habit of the time, who had been for some minutes gazing vacantly on the cheerless prospect before him, and smoothing the tips of his moustache, now turned round, with a yawn, to the interior of the great hall, which was unoccupied, save by two individuals besides himself. Both were his seniors.

One of them had been a remarkably tall man; but it would have been difficult to recognise the handsome martial figure of his youth in the emaciated old man, who now sat, bent nearly double, on a low stool, with his chin resting on his withered hands, in the shade of the large open fireplace, watching the embers of the large pine logs.

Although the festival of Christmas was near, there were no apparent signs of the rejoicings

usual in the baronial mansions at the time, except a few small twigs of holly here and there. A few relics of the dinner were visible on the great oak tables; but the meal had been concluded two or three hours before, and an empty flagon stood near a box and pair of dice, which shewed how the other two individuals between it and the window had been endeavouring to pass their tedious leisure hours. The young officer we first noticed, however, had been unable to induce his greyheaded companion, who sat near him, to risk more than such trifling sums as failed to excite the interest he desired, and the demon of Ennui had, it seemed, taken possession of his mind.

“I have now been here five days,” he observed, “and by the holy rood! if I stay five days more, I shall become as dull as a hermit, or our old seneschal there, who sits with his nose in the ashes till he grows as smokedried as one of

your Welch bards with the unpronounceable names."

The other, who was a weatherbeaten soldier and captain of the garrison, glanced towards the old knight, who sat under the chimney, before he ventured to reply ; but that personage seemed to take no notice of what passed.

" 'Tis dull for you here, doubtless, being used to King Henry's court, where there are, questionless, hawking parties, or tilts, or matters of that sort, as often, maybe, as once a month."

The other smiled, and shrugged his shoulders at the ideas of the old captain concerning the gaieties of a court.

" But what would you have, Sir Squire ?" continued the deputy governor ; " you know well we must keep watch and ward, and how much depends on our trusty vigilance."

Fitz-Stephen, for that was the name of the younger officer, nodded assent.

“The castle was not always so dull, in former years,” resumed the second speaker, (who seemed to be in an unusually communicative humour,) but since the wild flight of the haggard falcon up yonder in the tower,—you understand me,—a change has come over Cardiff, and Sir Robert is an altered man.”

“But how,” inquired Fitz-Stephen—“how did you recover your bird and bring him back to the perch? I would fain hear the story, since nothing certain has been told me yet about it;” and he seated himself by the other’s side, who glanced once more at his superior before he began his narration, in a tone not designed to reach the ears of more than the person he addressed.

“It was not long after the battle of Tenchebray, some thirteen years back, that we first heard of a prisoner being consigned, for a time, to this castle. It was about the end of the year when he arrived, and I can never forget the look he

gave when he paused, as the portcullis was raised for him to enter, and looked round at the wide sea in the distance, but Sir Robert took his horse's rein and hurried him into the interior.

At first, all went smoothly; he was like an honoured guest, and rode forth when he pleased, with hawk and hound, up the banks of the river Tavy, though the seneschal of the castle was almost always close at his elbow. This chased and fretted his proud spirit, and though they joined together in the chace yet there were but few words exchanged between the seneschal and his charge. At last, an opportunity for escape seemed to offer itself. Sir Robert Fitz-Hamon had heard of the mutinous assemblage and discontents of the Welch in the neighbourhood of the hills, and went out, with part of the garrison, to quell them. The third day of his absence the prisoner rode out with the falconers in unusual spirits, but in a few hours the men

returned to spread the alarm that he had fled. He was pursued immediately. I knew he could not get far away, for parties had been posted all round the country a few miles off, by Sir Robert's orders; so we rode leisurely along in the track we supposed he would take. Well, we had not long to seek for him. He had seen a few dozen of our men piqueted on a hill some six or eight miles from hence; to avoid them the unguarded fool turned into a little wood at the foot of that slope, where the best steed that ever was foaled could not have borne his rider through. We surrounded the copse; and, by the holy mass ! there we found our quarry on horseback, swearing, and calling on all the saints in the calender for help. There they were, both horse and man, fast in one of the blackest bogs in the country. Ha ! ha ! Our seneschal returned a few hours after the prisoner had been brought back to Cardiff, and a stormy meeting

it was between them, you may well guess. Since that day our slippery charge has been kept safe between four walls, without being allowed to leave the castle."

"And since then," asked Fitz-Stephen, with some interest, — "since then, how does the captive deport himself? Is he well or ill at ease. There are certain whispers——"

"Hush, for Heaven's sake!" interrupted the deputy governor; "there are few or none visit him save Sir Robert, and Matthieu the barbersurgeon. There are fearful things——"

Looking round at that moment they saw the individual last named standing close behind them; he had entered the hall with a noiseless step and was listening, in silence, to their conversation. He was a man of middle age and a tall ungainly figure, which appeared to more disadvantage in the tight-fitting dark-grey doublet he wore, instead of the ordinary fuller

and more graceful tunic of the period ; his cold grey eyes were fixed with an unmeaning glare, like those of a statue, straight before him ; for his impassible countenance was too well trained ever to betray any sort of emotion.

Fitz-Stephen had, indeed, seen this man before, gliding about the castle like an unquiet spirit, with a strong feeling of unaccountable dislike, but had never been so nearly in contact with him ; and he started to his feet, with an exclamation of anger at the intrusion. The barber-surgeon, however, without taking the slightest notice, moved upwards to the chimney where his patron remained, and, bending down, whispered something in his ear.

The seneschal rose, and proceeded immediately down the hall to where Fitz-Stephen was standing.

“ It is the accustomed hour of our evening devotion,” said the old knight, “ and we were

worse than heathens to omit such a duty on a holy eve."

So saying, he led the way to the small chapel, with a slow pace, and at his invitation Fitz-Stephen accompanied him; for everything moved with clockwork-like precision in the garrison of Cardiff, and the regularity of the customary routine would not have been allowed to be disturbed by any circumstance, short of an assault of the Welch, or a fire in the castle.

The Norman chaplain gabbled through the service with the greatest possible celerity, as if he had divined the impatience felt by some of his auditors; but the governor continued absorbed in the deepest abstraction during its continuance; and once or twice he was heard to mutter to himself, "Miserere mei, miserere mei peccatoris," by those who were near him; but this demeanour had been too common, of late years, to attract the notice of any except of his

guest, whose curiosity had been sufficiently roused, by various trivial things, to make him resolve to investigate much that had seemed mysterious in the few days of his abode in the fortress.

As if to anticipate his designs, however, on leaving the chapel he was accosted by Matthieu the barber, who was, in fact, the confidant and prime minister of the lord of the castle, and requested to visit Sir Robert Fitz-Hamon in his more private apartment.

The room, or rather cell, was small and plain, in which he found the old baron ; and though the weatherbeaten and withered features of the latter, as well as his whole demeanour, were composed to a grave and dignified courtesy, there was an occasional twitch of the corners of his mouth, and a look of the restless eyeballs, which betrayed more emotion than the occasion seemed to call for, as he motioned Fitz-Stephen

to be seated. There was an uneasy pause, which Sir Robert was the first to break.

“I trust that my guest has not had cause to complain of the reception and hospitality an old man has afforded him within these walls?”

The young officer hastened to assure him that he was eager to express his thanks for the manner in which he had been received.

“I trust,” continued the seneschal, with increasing hauteur, “that as long as I can call these poor walls my own, I shall ever be willing to receive any visitor of gentle birth in a becoming manner, even did he not come recommended by my Sovereign.”

Fitz-Stephen bowed in acknowledgment, internally wondering what all this was tending to.

“And now, Sir Squire, I may ask, in my turn, if it is becoming to pry into matters that concern not a stranger, and to seek to discover what might be better concealed?”

The blood mounted to the young man's brow, and he answered—

“Sir Robert, I may complain, and justly, of the manner in which you conceal every circumstance from the emissary of the King. It is now several days since I have been in Cardiff, and were Henry to ask me to give an account of the state of your prisoner, the strength of your castle, or the degree of security you are in against the Welch, or any other enemies, I could tell him no more than the groom who tends my horse; nay, not so much, perhaps. By the rood! everything here is wrapped up in as much mystery and jealousy as if I had come from the court of Fulk of Anjou, instead of our Liege the King, at Westminster.”

The seneschal frowned.

“Well, young Sir, I asked not for the custody of this prisoner, and right glad should I be if King Henry would transfer him to another.”

“ Nay, I will not be treated like a peevish child,” returned Fitz-Stephen, whose hasty temper began to exceed the bounds of moderation. “ Do you not believe the King’s message on which I came, that you obstinately keep me ignorant of all I should learn for his information ?”

“ An honourable errand you have undertaken, Sir Squire,—that of a spy on our actions !” bitterly observed the old baron.

“ And a noble occupation you have accepted in your old age, Sir Governor,—that of gaoler to one who was never your enemy !” retorted the other, in high disdain, springing up from his seat, and pacing the room hastily; but by the time he had taken two or three turns, his anger cooled, and seeing the old knight remaining immovable, he added, with a constrained smile, holding out his hand—

“ Sir Robert, I would not willingly offend

you ;—we who serve princes must not be over-scrupulous as to our errands, as you well know."

The seneschal accepted the proffered reconciliation with some stiffness, and the other proceeded with less embarrassment, since the ice was now broken.

"There are strange stories afloat, Sir Seneschal, concerning your barber-surgeon ; but I ask not of him. They say there is a person who wanders round the walls of the castle daily ; who knows what intelligence may be conveyed ? nay, I have myself seen such an individual, with a large brown hood, prowling round."

"I trouble myself not with such fancies, and I pray you, Sir Squire, not to perplex your head with them," answered Fitz-Hamon, drily. "I have enough to answer for within the walls of Cardiff, nor do I care for witches or ghosts, in black, white, or brown hoods, outside."

Fitz-Stephen shook his head, and crossed himself.

“It is nothing but a poor old wandering beggar,” continued the governor. “He is crazed, they say, and harmless. But what other important queries does King Henry wish me to answer, I pray you?”

“Nay, nothing, nothing!” was the reply; “yet it would be as well if I carried back to the King a report of the state and condition of your charge.”

The old governor was silent for a few seconds before he answered.

“Well! if you must—you shall be satisfied; you may see the prisoner, and Matthieu shall be summoned to conduct you. Is that enough?”

The other bowed, and on the sound of a silver whistle, which lay near the seneschal, the barber-surgeon made his appearance at the door.

“ I sought not this charge,” continued Fitz-Hamon, as they left his presence ; “ I asked it not ; Heaven knows how willingly I would resign it. Seventy-six winters have passed over my head, and faithfully have I served my sovereign and executed his commands,—alas ! but too faithfully, too much so, for my own peace.” A shudder came over him, and he turned himself towards a rude image of the Virgin which hung against the wall. “ It was a cruel precaution ; but it was not my doing,—it was not my hands that executed it, as thou knowest ! Holy Mother of God, pray for me !” and the old man covered his face in his hands.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRISON.

“ My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon’s spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are banned and barred,—forbidden fare.”

BYRON.

THE little town of Cardiff, which had been built about thirty years before the time of our story, afforded by no means an unusual example of the manner in which the followers of William the Conqueror had succeeded in establishing themselves in the country. The Welch were still governed by their own petty princes, who

boasted of deducing their pedigree from the half-fabulous kings of the ancient Britons, and maintained their independence among their mountain fastnesses by the help of the courage and indomitable fierceness of their tribes. But while this was the case with the greater part of the country, Glamorganshire had early fallen under the Norman yoke, in consequence of civil discords and jealousies. In the reign of William Rufus, one of the chiefs of the ancient Britons and prince of the district, named Justin, had revolted against his sovereign, Rhys, but finding his struggles ineffectual against that prince's superior force, he took a course in concert with, and by means of, his son-in-law, Ivo, which made him bitterly repent of his rashness when it was too late. This was, to invite Sir Robert, the son of Earl Hamon, to come to his assistance, and throw the weight of the more practised science of the Norman

chivalry in the art of war into the scales. The opportunity was too tempting to the ambition of a young, enterprising, and ardent knight, as Fitz-Hamon then was, to be neglected. A number of troops soon began to flock to the standard of the Norman adventurer, and at the head of twelve other knights and their followers, he marched into South Wales to the assistance of Justin. The Welch were not tardy in attacking the latter with his reinforcement of strangers. Though superior in numbers, and fighting with the desperate valour of their country against a foreign invader, still their rude, undisciplined onset was no match for the lances of the trained cavalry, nor could the British, clothed only in loose tunics, entirely without defensive armour, be expected to be able long to resist their adversaries sheathed in complete mail. The rout was, in fact, total; and Prince Rhys himself fell under the spear

of Fitz-Hamon, while engaged in the hopeless task of making head against his enemies. Justin accordingly became master of the country ; but he was not long allowed to profit by the effects of his treachery. The fertile district towards the southern coast seemed too pleasant and agreeable in the eyes of his Norman confederates to be left in the possession of a native Welchman. On the first opportunity, Fitz-Hamon turned his arms against Justin himself, under the pretence of the latter not having kept his word with Ivo, soon dispossessed him of the patrimony of his ancestors, and divided the country among his own followers.

The subjugated Welch had seen with dismay the octagon embattled keep and the massive towers of Cardiff, gradually raised on a rocky cliff near the sea ; both as an emblem of the irresistible sway of their new masters, and an impregnable fastness, within which the Norman

could intrench himself against the attacks of the native princes, who still lurked among the mountains towards the north, and made occasional descents into the cultivated southern districts.

The town was at that time in its infancy, and seemed, with its little church, to have crept close under the shadow of the powerful fortress for protection and defence, which was, indeed, very probably the motive of those who built it, being mostly Anglo-Norman settlers from the neighbouring marches, or debateable ground.

The years which had passed away since that conquest had been little more than a series of skirmishes and unsuccessful struggles, on the part of his vassals, against Fitz-Hamon and his Norman knights who occupied the country, which, in consequence, had only served to rivet their chains the firmer. His power was confirmed and strengthened by the degree of royal

favour which he had enjoyed in the two successive reigns of Rufus and his more politic brother, Henry I. Old age, however, now crept upon him, and the natural pride and haughtiness of his temper had latterly deepened into a gloomy moroseness and irritability which made him hated as well as feared.

Since the unsuccessful attempt at escape of the illustrious prisoner taken at the battle of Tenchebray, this had become more visible almost daily ; and his reception of the young man whom his sovereign had entrusted with a confidential mission was, as we have seen, marked with a coldness and suspicion visible through the courtesy which the manners and customs of the age required imperatively towards every guest. The strict military discipline kept up in the castle, and the veil of mystery which seemed to envelop everything connected with the prisoner, suggested to Fitz-Stephen the idea of a fabled

castle of romance, in which the grisly old baron played the part of its necromantic master, and the barber-surgeon was no unapt representative of the familiar spirit, or hobgoblin, who waited to execute his commands, as he wandered about with noiseless step, and seemed almost to be endowed with the privilege of ubiquity. The young man could not forbear a smile as the thought crossed his mind, while Matthieu was accompanying him to the ward of the castle in which the prisoner was confined ; but he, however, began to put a few queries to his guide, which the latter seemed in no humour to answer, and when he got a reply, it was always an evasive one. Well aware of the all-potent influence of gold, he slipped a piece into the other's hand during their progress through the courts and passages, but he soon noticed, with some vexation, that it failed to unlock the taciturnity of that functionary, whose hand

seemed to close upon it and transfer it to his pouch with the silent mechanical dexterity of an automaton. It might be, that the part of his profession which so nearly allied him to the practitioners of the healing art had counteracted the communicative tendency belonging to barbers of all ages and countries, like an acid neutralizing an alkali; but it was nevertheless provoking to Fitz-Stephen, who had hoped to glean some explanation, directly or indirectly, from this man.

“I were doubly unworthy,” observed the barber-surgeon, without appearing to notice the chagrin on the other’s countenance,—“I were doubly unworthy of the confidence Sir Robert is graciously pleased to honour me with, did I explain more of what he may desire not to be known, than he has thought proper and fitting himself to communicate with his own mouth. Yet I may give you a piece of advice that may

be of service to you in return for your guerdon: it is this,—quit the castle as soon as you conveniently may; tarry not with the bishop, or with any other in Wales, but return to England with all speed; it will be best and safest for you."

There was something in the cool tone of this speech which caused in Fitz-Stephen an almost irresistible desire to knock down the speaker: but a moment's reflection enabled him to restrain himself, and he closely questioned Matthieu as to the reasons which would require him to hasten his departure. But it was in vain; the lips of the latter were again closely sealed against all inquiries, and Fitz-Stephen was obliged to content himself with following, in silence, to one of the lofty square towers which were built at right angles with the other walls of the fortress. The moon had now risen, and when the gusts of wind which whistled round the turrets now and then dispersed the

clouds, and her light fell, at intervals, on the solid, heavy masses of masonry, pierced with small square apertures, a half-uneasy sensation came over his mind, as they passed several sentries successively.

On being, at length, admitted into the tower, by a low round archway, Matthieu took up a cresset light, which was kept burning below, to light them to the apartment inhabited by the prisoner, and his countenance appeared so unearthly in the glare, that the young man felt his instinctive dislike almost increased to a superstitious horror of the Norman official. He was conducted by the latter into a dark vaulted chamber, and, as his guide opened the massive door, an inquisitive eye might have detected a sort of tremulous hesitation, totally unlike his usual manner. But Fitz-Stephen was too eager to observe the inmate of the tower, to bestow any attention on his guide.

It was a man of about sixty, who was seated

on a low oaken form, and turned his head towards them, without rising, at their entrance. Originally, his frame had been cast in the most robust and muscular mould; but grief and years of tedious imprisonment had done their work—as his white hair sufficiently testified, as well as the prominence of the veins over the large bones and knuckles of the broad but wasted hand that lay on his knee.

Fitz-Stephen made an obeisance, of which the prisoner appeared not to be conscious;—there was a silence of a minute or two.

“I heard the step of a stranger—why does he not speak?” said the blind man, inquiringly; “or who has Fitz-Hamon thought fit to send me now?”

“I have not been sent by the Governor,” said his visitor, rather quickly; “my errand is from our gracious King at Westminster.”

“How! from that perfidious Henry whom

I no longer call my *brother*!" cried the unfortunate captive, springing up with something of his former energy, and instinctively grasping at the side of his girdle, where the sword formerly hung. "What next—from *him*! He has already robbed me of a kingdom; he has deprived me of liberty, of the blessed light of heaven; he has taken my eyesight, and what now remains but my life? Speak! art thou come to take that also? Have I lived too long for them?"

Fitz-Stephen hastened, with some warmth, to repel the idea of his being an assassin, and eagerly assured the Duke of Normandy (for it was the elder brother of Henry, whom he had committed to the custody of the Lord of Cardiff) that the King had only sent him to ascertain, personally, the state he was in, and whether he was duly attended on. As he detailed these objects and reasons of his visiting Wales, the

unhappy Prince gradually relaxed from the posture of defence he had assumed, and reseated himself with his face concealed in his hands. When Fitz-Stephen, who naturally felt annoyed and embarrassed, to justify himself, dwelt on the good intentions of Henry, Robert turned towards him and shook his head, with a bitter smile of incredulity, at intervals. At last, his worn countenance became more animated as he abruptly asked Fitz-Stephen concerning his only son, who had been left as an orphan "de facto," his mother, the Lady Sibylla, having died in a year or two after her marriage.

Notwithstanding the signs made him by the barber-surgeon to remain silent, the young man, who had received no orders of secrecy on that point, and was besides anxious to vindicate himself and to do something to gratify the prisoner, for whom he could not help feeling some compunctions visitings of compassion, in-

formed him that his son was everything a father could wish—a handsome prince, of nineteen, well skilled in all the exercises of chivalry, and living beyond the power of the King of England, at the court of Fulk, Count of Anjou, an independent Seigneur under the French crown. The prisoner devoutly thanked Heaven at hearing of his son's welfare, and was profuse in his acknowledgments to his visitor for the communication. It was the first relief he had enjoyed during his dreary term of confinement, and a fresh train of ideas ran through his mind ; as he rapidly thought over the possible consequences and combinations that might arise from the place of his son's residence, a new prospect of life and liberty seemed to dawn before him. How great is the impression any kindness, though trifling, makes on the miserable, and how slight is the foundation requisite for the day-dreams and unsubstantial visions conjured

up by an ardent and enthusiastic mind when confined within the walls of a prison.

Matthieu, however, who seemed to have a malignant dislike to everything which could alleviate the misfortunes of his charge in any way, was anxiously seeking for some excuse to put an end to the interview. An unusual noise at that hour soon attracted his attention, and as he threw open the casement, the sounds became more distinctly audible, from the little town below (the wind having now sunk), and it was evident that persons were before the gate-tower, who asked for admittance, and their entrance caused some stir and bustle in the castle. This was fully sufficient, and he quickly hurried Fitz-Stephen back to the more inhabited part of the edifice, where the cause of the confusion was soon ascertained. The seneschal, however, treated it with great indifference, real or affected, when his visitor returned. It was (he

said) nothing more than one of the old and customary squabbles between the Normans and Welch. The latter had been quiet for an unusual length of time, and they no doubt flattered themselves they could resist with impunity; but he was well aware of their machinations, and could crush them at any moment. A farm had been burnt, and the inmates driven to the shelter of the fortress; but that was a mere trifle, the grim old baron assured his guest, and a very few days would rectify all such matters, especially as the twelve knights who held lands and castles under him were bound to attend in defence of their feudal lord.

The next day, Fitz-Stephen took his leave, with somewhat different feelings from those with which he had first been welcomed by his entertainer. The demeanour of the seneschal appeared more constrained and formally courteous than ever on parting. The barber-surgeon stood

perched, like a bird of ill omen, on a flight of steps, with his unalterable stony look; and the only person with whom the young man felt a shade of regret at parting was the deputy governor, who on his side was sincerely sorry at losing the temporary relief his society had brought to the gloomy ennui of the castle.

As he looked back once more at the towers of Cardiff, before proceeding on his journey, a shade of melancholy crossed his mind at recollecting the miserable lot of the unfortunate Robert of Normandy, who was destined never to leave them. An over-generous confidence (the fault of noble minds) had been his only error; and having been taken prisoner at the battle of Tenchebray, which had taken place, strangely enough, on the anniversary of that of Hastings, which gave his father the crown of England, he had been now detained upwards of thirteen years a prisoner. His eyes had been

put out by a barbarous precaution since his attempt to escape, and, by a refinement of cruelty, the barber-surgeon who had been the operator was continued as the principal attendant on his person. The chaplain of King Henry, who was present at the battle, had taken him prisoner with his own hand, and was rewarded for this clerical piece of service with the bishopric of Llandaff.

Fitz-Stephen had paid a visit to this prelate of the church-militant before arriving at Cardiff, and as he rode on could not help contrasting in his own mind the almost monastic severity of the governor with the gay jovial reception he had met with at the abode of the bishop, whose hawking and hunting establishment were the theme of wonder and astonishment of the native Welch. We must not judge the young man too harshly if he allowed his mind to dwell rather on the reminiscences of the episcopal

establishment than on the melancholy fate of the prisoner whom he had just left. It is natural to repel thoughts which cause us painful sensations, and Fitz-Stephen was too much imbued with attachment and gratitude towards the reigning monarch, to whom he owed almost everything, to be very willing to entertain ideas which might shake the feelings of loyalty which he conceived to be due towards his liege lord.

If he had been inclined to listen to the nobler and better feelings of his nature, the unmerited ill fortune of Duke Robert might have worked a revolution in his mind; but the ideas and principles which regulate successions by legitimate descent were unfortunately too little settled in that age to have much influence, (as is abundantly evident from history;) and without giving himself the trouble to reflect on such points, Fitz-Stephen allowed himself to be ruled by the impulses of loyalty and gratitude, which

he prided himself on feeling towards the actually reigning Prince. Such followers are highly useful to sovereigns; and Henry no doubt was well aware of the convenience of having a messenger who could be safely trusted to visit the fortress of Cardiff, and report on the condition of its inmates. The expedition, however, had been both irksome and repulsive to Fitz-Stephen, who longed to find himself once more on board the vessel of which he was proprietor, though employed occasionally on the King's service by land, it being, in fact, by no means unusual for the same individual to unite the two services, (in our times apparently incompatible.)

As he travelled through the country in the neighbourhood of Cardiff, he more than once noticed small parties of the people of the country apparently lurking and lying in wait for some person; once or twice individuals approached and questioned the archers who attended him

of his name and quality, which were received with a kind of sulky disappointment. Fitz-Stephen, indeed, doubted with himself, on observing these signs of ill will, whether it would not be well to turn back and assist, or put the old baron on his guard, against any popular outbreak of the Welch; but on second thoughts, considering the strength of Cardiff, and the indifference to danger of its seneschal, with the smallness of his own retinue, which did not exceed five or six armed men, it seemed better to continue his journey to the court of Henry.

We must, however, now proceed to change the scene to the other side of the English Channel; transporting the reader, neither by steam nor by the rapid conveyance of Agib Hassan's wondrous carpet, but by the simple wafture of the grey goose quill.

CHAPTER III.

THE ADVENTURER.

“Of twenty yere of age he was I guesse,
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And he had been some time in chevauchie,
In Flaunders, in Artois, and in Picardie.”

CHAUCER.

AT some distance from Beauvais, on the side of a sloping chalk hill, near the beech woods which clothe part of the extensive plains of Normandy towards the confines of Picardy, and increase the resemblance, of the former province especially, to some parts of our own island, stands the village of Poix, with its diminutive church, among the numerous apple and

pear trees which border the cornfields. In the twelfth century there existed, about half way between the hamlet and the boundary of the woods, a gothic "manoir," as the residences of the secondary classes of the nobility used to be called, consisting of a tower, with its appurtenances, and sundry apartments added at a later date than the original building. It was so far fortified that a handful of determined men might hold it out for some little time against a large force, (as was necessary in those times, even for those who were least disposed to quarrel with their neighbours,) but at the same time could not be said to aspire to the dignity of a fortress, or regular castle, with its paraphernalia of fosses, drawbridge, and portcullis. The evening was cold and frosty, and the smoke of its chimneys was a cheerful sight to a hunting party who were returning from the woods, in high spirits at their successful capture of a large

wild boar, whose devastations in their lately sown corn fields the peasants had long been complaining of.

The beast was laid across the back of one of the strong, neatly made, strawberry-roan-coloured horses of the country ; and two youths of sixteen or seventeen rode triumphantly on each side, discussing the events of the day's chace. Close behind followed their father, a knight of dignified and handsome presence, whose dark eye betrayed that he still enjoyed as much satisfaction in the pleasures of the field as his juniors ; several men on foot and grooms attended the party, who each seemed to look forward with pleasurable anticipations to the comforts of a Christmas hearth.

But when they had approached to within a few hundred yards of the outer walls of the enclosures of the manoir, their attention was suddenly excited by the noise of a struggle as of

armed men, at a little distance, which sounded distinctly through the clear frosty air; and in a few seconds a boy, dressed as a page, ran suddenly towards them from a thicket of trees and brushwood that intercepted their view of the spot from which the sounds came.

“Help! help! for our Lady’s sake noble gentlemen!” cried the page, with a look of terror; “robbers have set on my master, and the best blood in Normandy may be spilt for want of succour.”

The young men looked to their father for orders, and Sir Walter Tyrrel (for it was the husband and the sons of Adela who formed that hunting party), having hastily given his orders to the domestics to follow them, put his horse to a canter, which soon brought them to the scene of action.

It was a young man of nineteen or twenty, who, with his back to the stem of a tree, was

contending singly, and on foot, against a party of eight or ten mounted archers; his horse, a splendid gray charger, lay helpless and bleeding on the ground, while a yeoman, or groom, was already disarmed and bound. There was a small mount or hillock at that place near the road, clothed with beeches, oaks, and underwood, among which the gang had probably been for some time lurking in wait for their prey.

The reinforcement afforded by Sir Walter Tyrrel and his party making the numbers more equal on both sides, the assailants of the young man paused, and suddenly abandoning their object, took to flight across the country with all speed. Robert Tyrrel, the eldest of the two sons, incensed at the cowardice they displayed, set off in hasty pursuit, clattering over the frozen ground, while his less irritable brother remained to assist their father in untying the groom, and

attending to the stranger, who was now bleeding considerably from a wound received in the encounter. The young man was eminently handsome, and there was that certain air of nobility about him which, though undefinable by description, distinguishes its possessor from the crowd, whatever may be the dress or circumstances under which he is seen. Something, too, in the character and expression of his features apparently reminded Tyrrel of former persons or times, for he could not help scrutinizing them with the same interest as we feel in viewing those of a friend who has been divided from us during a long interval of years.

But the stranger bled fast in the meantime, and it was necessary to transport him to the manoir, which was at no great distance, and he was accordingly placed on another horse (his own being killed), when just as they reached the outer gate, Robert Tyrrel and three or

four of the hunting attendants came back from their chase, which was unsuccessful, their horses being both naturally slower and already fatigued with their day's hunting. The stranger could not help smiling at the vexation young Tyrrel displayed at being unable to overtake the fellows, which he vented, as usual in such cases, in a storm of execrations at their cowardice; but he nevertheless expressed his warmest thanks to Sir Walter and his sons for their timely interference, without which his enemies might have proved too many for him; "and those who most likely set them on are both numerous and powerful, as I know full well," added the stranger, with a half-suppressed sigh, as they entered the court of the manoir.

The foremost person of the group which received them was a young female, whose figure, naturally slight and undersized, was rendered unpleasing by a trifling deformity in the

bust and shoulders; nor were the features, though by no means repulsive, at all calculated to redeem the disagreeable effect produced. Her dress and manners, however, shewed at once she was not a menial, and as she advanced to welcome the party, and saw the form of a young man bleeding in the uncertain light, an exclamation of terror escaped her; but on recognising her father and brothers unhurt, she quickly recovered her presence of mind, and the wounded stranger was supported into the interior of the buildings, and every attention paid to him that his condition required.

Sir Walter seemed to feel some unaccountable interest for his unexpected guest, and whilst he took an active part in all the arrangements for the comfort of the latter, fixed on his countenance a gaze both longer and more earnest than seemed warranted either by ordinary curiosity or politeness during the time that

his daughter (who, like many other damsels of the period, discharged the functions of a leech towards those who were in need of surgical help,) proceeded to dress and bind up the wound, till she pronounced rest and quiet in the chamber to be essential, and that the patient should be left alone.

The Demoiselle de Poix, as she was called, had, as we have seen, no pretensions to beauty; but, partly perhaps on that very account, her superior strength of mind and character had induced her to strive to acquire every sort of knowledge and accomplishment within her reach; in which she had succeeded so far as to excel the greater proportion of her own sex at that time. Medicine and surgery was a useful, and even necessary, accomplishment of a lady in the twelfth century, when there was daily risk of her father, husband, or sons, being brought home on a litter, transfixated with a lance, or

with broken heads or limbs; and when to a proficiency in needlework she had superadded the knowledge of music, reading, and writing, no wonder that Berthilde, the daughter of Sir Walter Tyrrel, was looked upon almost as a prodigy. But although her father had been favoured and honoured by the unfortunate Robert Duke of Normandy as long as he retained possession of his duchy, the provinces were now under the sway of the English sovereign, and many of the knights and barons of Normandy and Picardy kept aloof from any intercourse with the Seigneur of Poix. The terrible stain which still, in spite of the religious expiations he had performed, rested on the involuntary regicide in their opinion, was, unjustly enough, also extended to his family. The consciousness of this had worked on the young mind of Berthilde, and had produced a kind of gloom and melancholy, approaching to misan-

thropy, in her disposition, unnatural to a person of her age. Often, when left alone in her turret, while her father and brothers were absent in the chace, she sate for hours together at the casement, with her neglected occupations lying before her, in a fixed silent reverie, till at last a flow of bitter tears would come to her eyes. But it was only at intervals that her proud and vexed spirit broke into such demonstrations; her character was of too masculine a turn to allow of her giving way to such emotions as her sense told her were not fit to be indulged in, and she forced her attention to turn itself to other objects. Having early lost her mother, and being little accustomed to the society of her own sex, her character had assumed a decision and independence not often found in woman.

Sir Walter was reserved and thoughtful during the rest of that evening, contrary to his custom, and his daughter could learn nothing

from her brothers of the stranger's name and rank, though they detailed repeatedly the occurrences of the day. Robert Tyrrel, however, was convinced the assailants were no common robbers, as he had recognised two or three of the retainers of a Norman baron, who was one of the most zealous supporters of King Henry's authority, among their number, though without the badge or cognizance of their master.

The Demoiselle de Poix passed a restless night. The interest she might naturally be supposed to take in a young and handsome stranger, who had become her patient under such circumstances, was increased by the sort of mystery which seemed to hang over everything relating to him, and occasioned her various conjectures, and an eager curiosity to know the causes. Then again she would reflect that such encounters were by no means very extraordinary or unusual occurrences in those times (whatever

they might seem in ours), and would take herself to task for the unaccountable sympathy she felt towards him as unmaidenly and indecorous; but she found it beyond her powers of self-control to banish his idea from her mind, or his resemblance from her dreams.

For several days following, the stranger was tended with the care and assiduity of a sister, and his frank courteous manners and disposition completely attached Tyrrel's two sons to their still nameless guest. The marked attention and respect paid towards him by their father, and the unusual reserve observed by the latter, as to anything that related to the name and rank of his guest (of both of which, however, he had evidently now become aware), while it excited their surmises, gave him additional interest in their eyes.

One day, it so happened that Berthilde was seated, engaged with the young knight in the “moult ancien et delectable jeu des Eschecs,” (as it is styled by the monastic author who has written on the subject, and made the antiquity of that game coeval with the siege of Troy and an invention of Ulysses,) and her adversary was in the embarrassing situation of finding himself within a move or two of losing the game. Robert Tyrrel, who was standing with his back turned towards his sister’s seat, engaged in the amusement (common to many young gentlemen in bad weather) of looking out of the narrow leaded panes of the window of the large hall, suddenly broke the silence, by observing—

“In truth, he *has* a right noble head and neck, and an eye that shews high blood.”

The Demoiselle de Poix started, and lowered her eyes, which had been at that moment fixed on the countenance of her perplexed opponent,

colouring at the same time, as if her brother could have divined what was passing in her thoughts.

“ How mean you ?” said the knight, looking up, unconsciously.

“ It is the bay charger my father has presented you with, in place of your own, who was so feloniously killed,” answered Robert, equally unobservant of his sister’s looks, as the other rose and joined him in looking out at the animal, who was being led across the court by some grooms at that moment.

“ I scarce know how to thank your father for all he has done for me,” returned the stranger.

“ Would that the time was come when I could make my actions speak for me !”

“ You like the horse ?”

“ He will replace my own nobly,” was the reply. “ My gallant grey Anjou !—if he had lost his life either in the battle, the tournament,

or the chace, I could have borne it better ; but it was hard to lose him by the means of those dastardly assassins."

" May you have better fortune when you bestride his successor to-morrow, on your road to Paris !" said Robert Tyrrel.

" We will hope so, at least," answered the knight, resuming his game.

" Do you, then, leave us so soon as to-morrow ?" asked Berthilde.

" I must do so," was the reply, " since, thanks to my kind and gentle nurse, I have now been able to bear the saddle for two or three weeks past ; for my enemies are both numerous and powerful. Should they discover my presence here, their implacable enmity would wreak its vengeance on this manoir, and on your father, in return for his services and hospitality."

The game was pursued in silence.

Capricious fortune seemed now to have de-

serted the Demoiselle de Poix all at once, for the tide of success rapidly turned in favour of her opponent, and a triumphant exclamation which soon followed from the latter, announced that the victory was won.

It was not long before the noise and clattering of armed men and horses in the court-yard below aroused their attention, and on looking out, they beheld three or four of the barons of the province, in complete armour, at the head of a numerous body of followers, received by Sir Walter, who seemed earnestly engaged in conference with the foremost knight. As they shewed themselves at the casements, the barons looked up and made a respectful obeisance, which Berthilde at first supposed was intended for herself, till she saw, with some surprise, that it was to their guest, who returned it with an easy demeanour, that seemed to imply it was his accustomed due.

As, however, the hall began to be thronged with the new comers, she retired to her own turret chamber till the time of the banquet. Her curiosity was obliged to remain ungratified till then.

At the hour of noon, the guests were found ranged round the board as the Demoiselle re-entered, and the stranger was placed at her father's right hand, as the post of honour, which his princely look and deportment seemed imperatively to claim, though his name and birth were still unknown. The upper lip was just beginning to be shaded with a slight down, and his neck, which was uncovered, according to the dress of the times, had not yet acquired the coarser, muscular development of middle age, but was white, smooth, and polished, like a woman's, and by its perfect proportions promising great future strength, gave dignity to the head, which, as the hair curling round the tem-

ples was cropped short, in conformity with the severe denunciations of the clergy against the fashion of long locks, resembled the bust of the Antinous. The whole appearance was that of a man who feels himself entitled by birth to a certain degree of respect, the consciousness of which prevents him from either appearing jealous of the merits of others, or over-careful in scrutinizing the exact degree of deference that may or may not be paid to him.

As the daughter of Sir Walter Tyrrel took her seat, the doors at the foot of the hall were thrown open, and the servitors entered, bearing the viands, when, to her surprise, her father stepped forward, and took the principal dish from the menial who carried it—it was the head of the wild boar whose capture was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter; and Tyrrel bent respectfully upon one knee as he presented the trophy to the young knight at the head of

the board. There was a movement of surprise among most of those present at this unexpected gesture, and in the silence that followed the tones of his voice were clearly heard, as he deliberately pronounced "that he thereby rendered suit and service for his lands, and did all rightful and true homage to the illustrious Prince William of Normandy, as son and representative of Duke Robert, their liege lord and suzerain, now unjustly detained prisoner in England." This formal, open, and undisguised act of recognition of their host seemed to startle the rest of the hearers in almost as great a degree as it amazed Berthilde, for they looked at each other's countenances with a kind of embarrassment, from which Prince William himself and Tyrrel appeared to be the only persons free.

"We have to thank Sir Walter Tyrrel for our life and liberty," observed the former, with

a smile, “but must confess we were not prepared for this act of homage. But bethink you, noble knights, this is what my uncle of England will style treason and open rebellion!—nay, has he not fleets and armies to do his bidding? Reflect! you may ruin yourselves without benefiting me, for he will not fail to visit you with his vengeance, whom he already suspects of looking with no favourable eye on his usurped rule. Think, then, of the risk you run, while there is still time.”

“Nay!” cried one of the barons, who stood by, “your Grace does us injustice in speaking thus. Have we not fought and bled by the side of Duke Robert in Palestine, and shall we now think it much to stand by his son when he needs our help?”

“I spoke but of prudence,” returned William. “Our Lady forbid I should distrust those whom I prize too highly to wish to lead into ruin.

King Henry may have riches, and power, and broad lands, to reward his adherents, while I have nought but a rightful cause and my good sword. But he can boast of no hearts or arms more true and loyal than those which I see here, who are not to be bought by gold, or cowed by dangers—and trust me, if there is anything I could envy him, it is, the power of bestowing on such the guerdon they deserve.”

Several of the knights now pressed round him, and grasped his hand with eagerness. Their enthusiasm was awakened for the brave young man they saw before them, deprived of his inheritance without fault of his or his father’s. The companions in arms of one of the most distinguished of the crusaders had feelings that were easily roused in behalf of his son, who reminded them of all the best qualities of his parent, and appeared almost entirely exempt from his faults and weaknesses. The sympathy

was contagious, and spread through all the retainers and menials, even to the curé of Poix, who found himself in the crowd, and muttered that the King of England was justly excommunicated by the church, and a scandalous oppressor of her rights.

Tyrrel stood apart for a time in melancholy silence, till William again turned towards him to repeat his expressions of gratitude.

“I alone,” he said, with a sigh, “must not accompany you. With the blight that rests upon me, *I* must never draw sword or bow near the person of my Prince—of the son of my friend and benefactor. (Heaven knows how blameless I am, and that I would have given my own life instead.) But I have two sons here, who long to engage in the career of arms, as becomes their age. Let them win their spurs under your banner. They shall be my substitutes, and they shall shew the world that they

can be frank and loyal to their liege lord, doing their devoir as Christians and gentlemen, although they have the misfortune to bear the name of the Knight of Poix."

The bitterness with which Tyrrel pronounced the last part of this sentence shewed how deeply the feelings he alluded to had entered into, and wounded, his heart.

William of Normandy, as we must now call him, instead of replying, extended his hand, good humouredly, to the two young men, who advanced towards him with looks of eagerness and delight at the prospect of entering into life under such auspices.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BROWN HOOD.

“ For I have pledged my knightly word
And faith and truth beside,
Come weal, come woe—who keeps not trust
Dishonour him betide !”

OLD BALLAD.

FITZ-STEPHEN, whom the reader has left on his return to the English court, learning that King Henry was residing at Winchester, the ancient seat of royalty in the southern parts of the island, determined to cross the mouth of the Severn to the opposite coast, in order to proceed at once to the presence of his politic sovereign. On stepping on shore at Bristol, however, his attention was immediately attracted by a small

boat of the country, which had also just disembarked her passengers, consisting chiefly of Welchmen, as appeared by their wild dress, and no less uncouth language and gestures, which seemed to be a source of wonder and curiosity to the groups near the landing-place, as the communication with the Cambrian shore was in those times neither frequent nor easy. The uncivilized appearance of these oppressed Britons, and their language, which sounded so wild and unintelligible in the ears of both their Saxon and Norman conquerors, were now no novelty to Fitz-Stephen since his visit to Glamorganshire; and he would have turned away to attend to the landing of his horses and attendants, had not his eye at that moment fallen on a man whose different dress and taller stature distinguished him from the Welch who surrounded him, and, coupled in his mind with the various appearances of turbulence and insurrection he

had so lately observed on the coast he had just left, as well as certain circumstances which had reached his knowledge during the time he had remained at Cardiff, excited at once his suspicions and curiosity. The individual was, as we have already observed, considerably higher than the natives who had just landed from the boat with him, and if he had not been in their company might probably have passed unnoticed ; but the contrast of his erect military bearing with those at his side was too striking to be overlooked. His habit was the peculiar loose robe of coarse stuff which had lately become familiar to the sight of the inhabitants of England, from the numerous pilgrims and palmers going to or returning from the Holy Land, or the various shrines in their own country supposed to be miraculously gifted, or sanctified ; and he might have easily passed as one of that class, but that, instead of the broad hat, bearing a scallop-shell

or palm branch, his head was concealed from view by a large, heavy, brown cloth hood, or cowl, which overhung the face, and shrouded his features completely from observation.

The stranger was not slow in perceiving he had attracted the notice of the Norman, and was endeavouring to evade it by mixing with the crowd, when Fitz-Stephen stepped up to, and suddenly addressed him, in a manner calculated to throw him off his guard. The pilgrim was for a moment embarrassed, but he nevertheless answered, in good Norman-French—

“ Fair son ! the night is fast closing in, and I would fain proceed on my way as early to-morrow as may be ; excuse my holding converse farther. Benedicite.”

“ Nay, worthy pilgrim,” returned the other, “ as you purpose to remain in Bristol this night, and I also leave it by the dawn to-morrow, I see no reason why you should not give me the

benefit of your pious company this evening, in return for the escort of my armed men on to-morrow's journey, for the ways are not over safe to travel alone."

"A man of peace, like me, may journey without fear; I have nothing to tempt violence against me," observed the stranger.

"My offer was made in all courtesy," repeated Fitz-Stephen, "and methinks, therefore, you should scarcely decline it, without some extraordinary reason for so doing."

The stranger muttered an excuse, but the envoy of King Henry continued to press him more closely, as he had his reasons for suspicion, since he was convinced that in the pilgrim he recognised the dress and gait of an individual who had been frequently observed wandering round the castle and town of Cardiff, like an unquiet spirit, for some time previously.

Seeing, however, the unwillingness of the

other to join his company, he pretended to give up the point, and returned to the water-side for a few minutes, giving one of his attendants, however, strict orders to watch the pilgrim, and bring him word of what place the latter proceeded to. He had not long to wait before the man came back, and informed his master, that as soon as the pilgrim thought himself unobserved, he had applied at the door of a small convent of black monks for admittance, and had been immediately received within the walls. In a very short time Fitz-Stephen followed, and knocked at the same gate for admission with his companions.

In the early times in which the present tale is laid, the state of society was such, that few or no regular hotels, or inns, as we should call them, existed out of London, and perhaps two or three of the large cities; nor if there had, would there have been travellers to fill them.

When the roads were precarious, and during half the year impassable, people lived and died without stirring twenty miles from their birth-place for any purpose of business or profit. A few of the great barons and ecclesiastical dignitaries, indeed, occasionally moved from place to place, with a household and retinue of dependents, poor relations, and various menial servants, that was intended to rival the establishment of the sovereign himself, on a scale proportioned to the rank and means of the individual. According to the feudal customs, the vassals of the crown were bound to support the king or the officers of his household, when they travelled near their part of the country; and that this was felt as a grievous vexation, and the right often abused, appears from the fact that the reigning monarch had thought it politic to listen to the frequent complaints made, and to issue an edict to limit and check the

exactions practised under that pretext. The various monasteries and religious houses had been by no means more backward than the lay vassals in their remonstrances of this kind, and, indeed, must have felt it particularly burdensome; since, upon ordinary occasions, they were the customary halting-places of travellers of every rank and degree, so that an additional tax of supporting the king's servants was hardly just or fair upon them. They were, in fact, the substitutes for a modern inn.

The monks, however, readily admitted Fitz-Stephen, as his followers were but few in number, and the arrival of strangers was always a relief in breaking the monotony of the conventional life, besides that, as being on the King's service, they might have been compelled to receive him in case of unwillingness.

The stranger was seated in the narrow refectory, which was illuminated by a blazing fire,

when Fitz-Stephen entered ; his large hood was thrown back, and disclosed the features of a man about fifty, whose forehead was seamed by a deep scar, scarcely concealed by his thin grey hair ; but the countenance was unknown to the young Norman.

“ So, here we are again met, friend pilgrim ! ” said the latter, taking a seat opposite, while the other looked at him with a fixed and somewhat stern gaze, without answering.

Fitz-Stephen pursued in a light tone ; but the pilgrim still wrapped himself up in his wonted reserve, and though he joined in the substantial meal which their entertainers set before them, all attempts to draw him into conversation were in vain. As most of the cloistered fraternity were Saxons, and conversed but imperfectly in the Norman-French, which was the only language the young officer condescended to use, he soon found himself at a loss for a companion ;

he accordingly made another effort to overcome the taciturnity of the pilgrim, in which he succeeded so far as to draw from him that the scar on his forehead was gained in Palestine some years since, at the siege of Jerusalem.

“ And so thou art a crusader, friend, and no clerk ?” observed Fitz-Stephen ; “ the more the pity, for I know many a priest who is a jovial boon companion, and would sing a merry song over his cups.”

The other smiled, for the first time since Fitz-Stephen had seen him, and pointed to his scar, as if to signify that it precluded him from joining in libations of the juice of the grape.

“ Well ! thou art not like a certain prelate I wot of, who can bestow stout buffets in the mêlée, and bestride a mettled charger, as well as he can sing mass loud and clear, or empty his cup with the strongest-headed toper.

The Saxon monks looked at one another

with a half smile, at this enumeration of episcopal accomplishments.

“ Ah ! he of Llandaff is a matchless bishop ! His wine (no disparagement to the mighty ale of our worthy host’s) is worth a pilgrimage to taste it ; then his hawks, horses, and hounds,— I would you could hear his bugle sounded, and his merry halloo in the chace !”

“ That prelate will never drink wine or follow the chase more,” observed the stranger ; “ he lies dead and stiff on the open field.”

“ Holy saints ! dead ?—It is impossible,” cried the young man, starting up ; “ I left him but ten days since, in treaty for purchasing a new Andalusian jennet.”

“ It is nevertheless true,” returned the other, calmly ; “ his own vassals have slain him on his own church land : wearied with his tyranny and exactions, they set on him unawares ; and several of his canons shared his fate.”

The death of the unhappy Norman bishop excited a general expression of horror at the sacrilegious act. Fitz-Stephen strode up and down for some little time, and exclaimed,—

“These will be heavy tidings to bear to King Henry, of the loss of his jovial chaplain;” then, stopping opposite the stranger, he continued,—“I scarcely know whether I ought not to arrest thee; how can I be assured thou art not one of the murderers, or, at least, an accessory?”

“Thou wilt scarcely venture to profane this sanctuary,” replied the other, even if armed with King Henry’s authority. For your accusations, enough that I am a Norman, that I have won my spurs in battle, that I detest and abhor that impious murder as much as thou canst do.”

“And were I to send thee back to Fitz-Hamon, would his county court acquit thee of the charges which might be brought against thee? Methinks the seneschal would have small

scruple in hanging thee up to feed the ravens on some of his high towers. If I mistake not, thou hast been near enough to the walls of Cardiff to know what sort of treatment thou art likely to meet with."

"It is easy to threaten a defenceless pilgrim," was the quiet answer.

The young man bit his lip and coloured for a moment; while the monks began to express to each other, in a low voice, their apprehensions and fears of the result; for they knew that the privileges of the clergy were not always respected, and the power of the envoy of the King was more likely to be abused than made use of with moderation. The cause of their terrors alone seemed to wait the event with indifference. The better nature of Fitz-Stephen, however, gained the upper side, and he extended his hand to the pilgrim after a little reflection.

"I would not willingly be forced to detain

thee, especially if, as thou sayest, thou art a knight and a Norman ; but yet I must discharge my duty towards the King, who has sent me to Cardiff on a certain service. Thou hast been wandering round that fortress in disguise, by thy own admission. This mystery must be cleared up before I can allow thee to leave this house. And if thou hast no reason to be ashamed of thine actions, thou wilt speak out clearly and frankly.”

The other coloured, as he answered, after a pause—

“ Dishonour has never yet been coupled with my name, young Sir, nor shall it now. Is it enough, if I pledge myself, as a noble and a soldier who has fought to gain the Holy Sepulchre from the possession of the Infidels, that I am guiltless of all participation in this murder, and have engaged in no plot against King Henry ?”

“ I must know further details, and your name and rank.”

“ What if I refuse to give them ?”

“ It matters little for that,” answered Fitz-Stephen, “ for remember, thou art in my power.”

The other hesitated for a few moments, without replying.

“ Wilt thou plight thy word before thy own followers and these holy men to let me depart, freely and unrestrainedly, provided I satisfy thy questions ?”

Fitz-Stephen assented, and they retired to the farther end of the long apartment to hold their conference without being overheard. But the first words almost of the communication which he heard, nearly made him repent of having rashly engaged himself.

“ Thou wilt not be surprised at my concealment (the first I ever have made use of, and I well trust it will be the last,) when I tell my

name. It is, Helie de St. Saen," said the stranger.

"The Knight of St. Saen!" repeated Fitz-Stephen with some surprise; had I but known of that sooner——"

"Thou would'st not have let me pass scathless, perhaps; is it not so?" returned the other; "for right well I know King Henry is full of wrath against me for my conduct. But I have, nevertheless, your plighted word."

Fitz-Stephen bowed, and bit his lips.

The son of Robert of Normandy was delivered to my care by King Henry himself, thirteen years since," continued the Knight of St. Saen. "I have acquitted myself of that charge, high and honourable as it is, to the best of my power and conscience. The young man has been brought up at the court of Fulk of Anjou, in a manner befitting his high birth. How else would the King have me treat him?"

“But why keep him at a distance from his natural guardian,” asked Fitz-Stephen; “what place so fit for him as his uncle’s court?”

“Ay, truly,” replied the other, “and how has that uncle treated his own brother, the bravest and most chivalrous of the princes of the Crusade? How can the son feel towards the gaoler of his father. It may not be.”

“But remember, I am in the service of him of whom you speak thus discourteously, nay, even unjustly,” interrupted Fitz-Stephen; “I have ever known him for a wise and valiant Prince, and one most noble and generous towards those who loyally serve him.”

“*Wise* enough,” returned the Knight of St. Saen, “and valiant, he doubtless is. But for the rest, when the kite may be safely trusted with the charge of the dovecote, or when the shepherd delivers over his flock to the guardianship of the fox or wolf, then shall William of Normandy

place himself under the power of Henry of England."

"Sir Knight, you speak over boldly."

"I speak but too truly," returned the other. What has been the fate of the Earls of Shrewsbury, Cornwall, and Lancaster, in spite of solemn treaties? And is Duke Robert honourably and duly served as a king's brother should be, in his captivity? Why is he so jealously guarded in the Castle of Cardiff; why does he never ride forth to the chace, as he used to do in former years?"

Fitz-Stephen made no reply, but cast his eyes to the ground on meeting the gaze of his interrogator.

"Even the place of his confinement is attempted to be concealed from every one," continued St. Saen; "it has cost me a long and wearisome search. But you—you have doubtless seen him? How does he support his heavy mis-

fortunes? Is he treated honourably, or is he deprived of everything that could lighten his confinement? Your silence is a sufficient answer. I shall ask nothing more; but claim your promise to let me depart with the earliest light."

The young officer of the King could not help feeling himself, in some degree, embarrassed and humiliated in the presence of the old crusader; but his word, however rashly pledged, was equally binding upon him; and it gave him considerable relief, after a night passed in reflections not of the most pleasant character, to find that Helie de St. Saen was already beyond his reach, even if he had been disposed to avail himself of any subterfuge, and render what he knew would be an acceptable piece of service to the King, by attempting to overtake and arrest the pilgrim.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEIR APPARENT.

“But Hal ! I prythee, sweet wag, shall there be gallows standing in England when thou art King ? Do not thou when thou art King hang a thief !” HENRY IV. ACT I. SCENE II.

IT was one of those warm mild days peculiar to the English climate, which occur frequently as early as January or February, when Fitz-Stephen drew near the court of the English monarch, and found himself towards the end of his journey, in a small valley within a few miles of Winchester, sheltered by well-wooded slopes from the violence of the winds, and dotted with several of the low white-washed dwellings of the Saxon peasantry. The sun was shining out

bright and cheerful ; the half-expanded yellow catkins of the hazel were waving gracefully from the boughs, and the notes of a few of the early song-birds added to the agreeable sensations caused by the scene, after the cold dreary winter. The plough was to be seen at work in different spots ; for the land belonged to the church, and the serfs and vassals of spiritual masters were encouraged and instructed in agriculture, at a time when those of the lay lords were too frequently called on for military service, and their fields were too often subject to the inroads of bands and troops belonging to some hostile baron or other, to allow them to expend much time or trouble upon the lands, whose produce they had so little chance of deriving any benefit from.

A troop of gay riders were seen at a little distance, and the bright-coloured cloaks and tunics of the male, mingled with the lighter

flowing drapery of the feminine, part of the cavalcade, enlivened the scene, as they advanced between the trunks of the still leafless trees. The sound of their voices and laughter came faintly to the ear. No armour or spears met the sight; they were evidently part of the court of Henry.

Presently the sounds ceased, and Fitz-Stephen saw them pause, and one or two Saxon peasants, who joined them, seemed to have caused some sort of altercation among the party. As he drew near he recognised the features of most of the knights and gay dames who composed it.

The principal person in the group was a youth, who appeared to be scarcely seventeen, in a dress which the glaring colours, as well as the richness of the materials and profusion of furs, contributed to render what the French call extremely "distingué," meaning thereby something by no means exactly reconcilable with our ideas of good taste. Notwithstanding

his boyish look and slight figure, there was a reckless expression in the eye, and a languor and paleness in the countenance, that indicated the premature roué, and took off from his otherwise handsome appearance. His bridle rein was grasped by an old man to arrest his progress, seemingly of the better class of the Saxon peasantry, whose grey hair, robustness of person, and sturdy independent look, made a striking contrast with the individual he was addressing with an earnestness and energy to which the latter was most likely unaccustomed. His bonnet lay on the ground, having been struck off by one of the bystanders, surprised and indignant at the audacity of one of that conquered race, with no pretensions to nobility, in approaching, unbidden, so near to the person of the Prince Royal,—for it was William, the only son and heir of King Henry, who rode in the centre of that courtly circle.

As Fitz-Stephen drew up to them, he was graciously noticed by a young lady at the head of a bevy of gay laughing dames, to which he returned a low obeisance, as the daughter, though illegitimate, of his King,—it was the Lady Mary, the beautiful Countess of Perth. Her brother, who had at first seemed a little embarrassed and thrown off his self-possession by the earnestness of the peasant's complaint, looked round at the new comer, and gave him a nod of recognition, without speaking.

The voice of the old man again broke the pause, before Fitz-Stephen had time to inquire the reason of what he saw.

“ Prince,” he said, “ in the ancient times there sat kings in the gate of yonder city to deal out justice to all comers alike. There was a time, it is said, when they caused jewels and bracelets of gold to be hung up in the highways ; and no

robber was found who dared to lay hands upon them.”*

The Prince laughed loudly at this assertion.

“ By our Lady ! a likely tale that. I would I could find a chain of gold in the road by looking for it. Thou art dreaming, old man, of some legend of the seven kingdoms of thy race.”

“ I dream not !” was the reply ; “ I ask thee for justice, though I be poor and humble, Prince ! I ask it on him who has, under false words and promises, robbed my daughter of her honour, and these grey hairs of the peace which might still remain for them. I ask it, if thou hast any sense of justice, though the betrayer is thy right-hand companion and friend !”

“ Tush ! thou hast none but thyself to blame, even according to thy own tale, stupid Saxon.

* This is related of King Alfred.

How couldst thou or she suppose a Norman gentleman would ever wed with the child of a franklin of thy race?"

The old man looked down for a moment; then asked, with strong emotion in his accent,—

"Is *this* the fashion of keeping marriage promises among thy companions?"

"Maybe! I care not," said the Prince; "but what wouldst thou have? I cannot give back thy daughter's fair fame, can I?" And he added a low jest, which caused some of the ladies to look aside, and a general laugh rewarded his sally.

Indignant at this insult, the Saxon turned to the Countess of Perth, and appealed to her; but, though the consciousness of his wrongs lent eloquence and force to his language, uneducated and unpolished as he was, it was lost upon the fair Countess, who curled her lip, and tossed her head with an air of careless contempt, as

she leant forward and patted her horse's neck in silence.

“Enough of all this nonsense,” cried the Prince, frowning impatiently; “we lose time in idle words. As for thee, old man, thou wilt be all the wiser next time,—but stay, take this, and be content,” added he, as he took several pieces of gold from his girdle, and thrust them into the father's hand, turning his horse away at the same time.

The old Saxon stood in speechless anger for a few seconds, looking at the Prince: then he dashed the money on the ground, and exclaimed, sternly—

“False, selfish Normans! Do ye think my child is like one of yourselves, that her honour may be purchased with a few paltry coins? Have we no feelings, like the beasts of the field, that thou treatest us so? But there is a dark cloud hanging over your fate,” he resumed, after a

pause. “ He who jests at woman’s honour, and scorns the grey hairs of a father, shall never himself be called by the name of parent, or live out his days in peace and honour !”

Prince William heard these words but imperfectly, being already at some distance ; but he distinguished enough, coupled with the action, to be aware of their import, and a flush of anger came over his features.

Some of his companions immediately offered to turn back in order to chastise what they termed the “outrecuidance,” or presumptuous insolence, of the offended franklin ; but William forbade them to hurt him, after an instant’s reflection, and rode on for some little time in haughty silence.

“ By the crown of Our Lady of Walsingham !” he ejaculated at last, “ it is no more than was to be expected from the crooked policy of my cautious father. He is too indulgent by

half to these Saxon hogs of the country ; and see what comes of it. But I will have the surquedry of these churls tamed. They shall be not only hewers of wood and drawers of water ; when I am King, they shall be beasts of burden, and draw the plough with their own shoulders !

The courtiers exchanged glances with each other and with Fitz-Stephen, who, on his part, could not help being struck with the words, and still more with the manner, of the Prince. It was evidently not the mere ebullition of passion of a young man ; it was the palpable manifestation of a deep-rooted hatred and contempt of the people he might one day be called upon to govern, for which it is difficult to give an adequate reason. Hume, the historian, makes the best excuse he can for him, by saying, that he doubtless had contracted this prejudice from his father ; and that the nation should have inspired

so politic and discerning a sovereign with such a violent aversion against them, is but little in favour of the character of his Saxon subjects, who are represented as but half-civilized. There can be no doubt that the Normans, generally, were far superior in advances towards civilization and refinement. But the hostile feelings between the conquerors and conquered were most likely stirred up and kept alive in the Prince's mind by interested and designing persons about the court of Henry, "where all places of profit and honour were bestowed upon Normans and foreigners," who, of course, would prejudice their sovereign against that portion of his subjects who were of Saxon descent.

With a slight alteration of names, are not the grounds of court jealousies and political contests in the 19th century somewhat similar.

But to return.

The Prince Royal rode on some time in silence,

till at last he began to notice the unusual damp on the spirits of his party; beckoning to Fitz-Stephen (whose open sailor-like manners had made him rather a favourite with the son as well as with the father), he made him ride by his side, and questioned him as to whence he came. The latter excused himself, and looked so grave that the young Countess of Perth, who was near, began to banter him on his gloomy demeanour. Fitz-Stephen was a little embarrassed, but turned off the light jokes of the lady as well as he could, till at length her brother, whose curiosity was rather piqued by the delay, required him, in open words, to tell where he had been.

Fitz-Stephen could only answer that the King had sent him on a special and private mission, without naming the place or object, which seemed to irritate the Prince, who was little accustomed to have his wishes thwarted in the

slightest degree. It was not that he had any particular suspicion, or that he even felt any extraordinary curiosity to know where the other had really been, but it was the usual caprice of a petted and spoiled child, who is certain to desire something, for no other reason than its being either forbidden or perfectly out of his reach.

As he continued to insist, the other saw, with great annoyance, that any further opposition would only serve to irritate him; and our friend Fitz-Stephen was by no means so deficient in worldly prudence as to choose to run that risk for the sake of a scrupulous regard to the secrecy which King Henry had enjoined.

He accordingly, having requested the Prince to ride apart with him for a short distance, at once told him he came from Cardiff.

“ How!—from Cardiff?” repeated the other, while his countenance underwent a deep change,

and became serious and overcast. “And how fares it with our brave uncle? Does Fitz-Hamon keep a cheerful court? They say Welch falcons fly bravely at the heron.” Fitz-Stephen looked down, and observed “that Duke Robert was no longer accustomed to ride forth to hawking or hunting.”

“Then it would seem as if he was but ill at ease, or perchance he is grown too old for such sports?”

It was evident, by the questions of the nephew of the unfortunate prisoner, that he was perfectly unaware of the strict and severe guard kept over his uncle, as well as of the dark atrocities which had come to Fitz-Stephen’s knowledge in the gloomy towers of Cardiff. The latter, accordingly, thought it better to abstain from divulging what he had learnt in his journey, and simply described the state of Duke Robert’s health and spirits. The young Prince,

however spoiled and selfish, had not lost all feelings of compassion, and the situation of his father's brother caused him a momentary emotion of regret, even at the simple idea of confinement. Had he known all, his heart would, most probably, have revolted from the cruel line of conduct which his father had thought it politic to follow. As it was, however, the impulse was but transitory, and after a few moments more of unimportant conversation, (which, however, kept the curiosity of the rest of the party eagerly alive,) he relapsed into his former strain of careless jocularity.

“ Well, friend Fitz-Stephen,” said he, as they rejoined the rest of the cavalcade, “ that gloomy visage of thine will suit my father exactly at this moment, for he has most likely by this time found out that I have stopped a few hundred zecchins on their way to his exchequer last night. I and a few of my gay comrades ex-

plained to the bearers that it mattered little if they were paid first to the sire or the son. A good jest, ha ! was it not ?" And the hopeful heir of the English crown rode off among the approving laughter of his companions.

King Henry received his messenger on his return with much apparent indifference, whether real or affected we leave to those who boast of being able to fathom the mysteries of the human heart to decide. At all events, no external change of countenance betrayed what was passing within, while he listened to the recital of Fitz-Stephen. The only part that made him shew any change of colour was when the latter described the death of the bishop of Llandaff, which excited his anger in no trifling degree. The account of St. Saen's pilgrimage to Cardiff also chafed him, and a share of his displeasure fell upon the head of our friend, who strove to

justify himself by pleading the passing of his word to the pilgrim to allow him to depart. To this the King only shook his head, and constantly replied—

“Thou art an honest fellow, Fitz-Stephen; but it would be well if thou hadst a larger share of wit in those brains of thine, to make up the balance against thy heavy load of honesty.”

And with this half-ungracious dismissal the disappointed esquire was obliged to content himself for the present, till he should, at some other time, again become necessary to his master.

But is it possible, the reader may ask, that Henry felt no compunction at the treatment his brother was made to undergo?—and a brother who had, at a former time, given proofs of even a chivalrous and affectionate generosity towards him, while they were engaged in a hostile war-

fare ! It does sometimes happen in the world, that as the sweetest liquors turn to the sharpest vinegar, so the nearer the relationship the more bitter becomes the animosity when natural affection ceases. No other mortal ever hates with the intense hatred of a brother.

The stings of conscience had, however, already begun to make themselves felt ; for we learn that the King was troubled with fearful dreams, so that he never slept without a light in his chamber, and a drawn sword by his bedside, within reach of his grasp. He also founded the abbey of Reading, that the monks might pray for his own and for his *brother's* ! welfare, before and after their deaths. The rich lands and possessions which he gave to the church seem not to have contributed to the purity of the monastic life, for at the dissolution by his successor, Henry VIII., four hundred years afterwards, the abbey of Reading was found to be one of

the most abandoned dens of iniquity in the country.

Such are the consequences of political usurpations and neglect of legitimate rights. But we must now again ask leave to cross the Channel, in order to attend to the fortunes of the son of Duke Robert—for, as the reader will have perceived, we do not pique ourselves upon presenting him with a distinctly connected narrative, and he must therefore be content with a series of dramatic sketches, if we may so venture to call them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE JOURNEY.

“ Who owns these towers, these woodland vales ?
Is he our friend, or foe ? ”

THE spring had already made considerable advances towards renewing the cheerfulness of summer vegetation, when the nephew of Henry of England set out from Poix, where he had spent so many agreeable hours. The court-yard of the manoir was nearly filled with armed men and horses, but though both the steeds and their riders exhibited a neat and accurate completeness in their equipments and armour, it was evident that all was prepared for use,

not show. There were no traces of the then newly-introduced fashion of exhibiting armorial bearings on the housings and saddle-clothes of the horses, or the surcoats, shields, and helmets, of their masters. It might be, that this was done purposely for the object of concealment; it had, at all events, the effect of giving a more serious and determined air to the whole expedition than was usual in those times, when pomp and parade were no less attended to in military matters than they are in our own, whatever complaints on that score are urged by old soldiers. The bay charger with which Sir Walter Tyrrel had presented his illustrious guest was standing in the middle, with his accoutrements equally as plain and undistinguished as the rest. William of Normandy laid his left hand on the pommel of the saddle, and, without aid from the stirrups, vaulted at once into his seat, completely armed in steel as

he was—a feat which, requiring a considerable share of personal strength to be performed under the weight of a suit of armour, as well as practised activity, formed an essential part of the exercises which young men were then required to learn before admission into the honourable order of knighthood. Sir Walter rode forth with them part of the way, and after a few hours' riding took an affectionate leave of his two sons, who were henceforward to attend on William's person. The latter warmly pressed the hand of the Knight of Poix, and renewed his thanks to him at parting. For some time he stood looking after the little troop, with many earnest wishes for its success, before he turned his horse's head towards home.

The cavalcade which surrounded William of Normandy was, if not numerous, composed of some of the best and bravest of the country. Next to the young adventurer, rode the gallant

Count of Evreux, his distant relation and attached friend, with several others, who had either received benefits from Duke Robert or feared the animosity of Henry. The cowardly attempt so lately made by the last-named monarch to get possession of his nephew's person by means of hired ruffians—it might be, assassins, had filled their minds with indignation ; (for there could be no doubt of his being the original instigator;) and such of Robert's fellow crusaders as were not disabled, by age or otherwise, eagerly pressed, as soon as they heard the circumstances, to the assistance of his son. There was also another motive. Several lived in constant dread of the King of England, who, they knew, would occasionally conceal his anger or suspicions, and when a plausible pretext offered itself, visit them with ruin and imprisonment, as he had already done with the Earl of Shrewsbury, Robert de Pontefract, and

other distinguished adherents of his unfortunate brother. The archers and men-at-arms kept at some little distance from the more distinguished personages who surrounded William, in order to allow them to converse without restraint. Few words, however, were exchanged by their leaders, for each had his own subjects for reflection, which disinclined him for conversation. The enterprise for asserting the claim of young William to at least the Duchy of Normandy was full of danger and difficulty, especially against so wise and powerful a prince as his uncle the King of England. The latter had, in fact, already landed in Normandy with a considerable force, and skirmishes had begun to take place on the frontiers, between detached parties and the followers of the French King, who were near the borders. William had hitherto led a wandering life, occasionally received with kindness and sympathy at the courts of various

princes, but he then, for the first time, found himself at the head of so considerable a number of armed men as formed his voluntary escort, and, naturally of a more reflective turn of mind than his too-generous and easy-tempered father, the circumstances in which he had been so early placed had developed the more serious and energetic parts of his character.

It was some hours past noon, and the country they had been passing through, leaving Beauvais on their right hand, was high, bleak, table land, thinly peopled by a few wretched serfs and peasants ; the ground, however, now became more broken into hill and dale as they approached some of the tributary streams which flow into the Oise, and the heights began here and there to be covered with wood. At a place where the road branched off, they came in sight of an old and rude cross of wood, which, though

originally tasteless and ugly, (apart from associations of ideas) had now been mellowed by the effects of time and weather into a more agreeable object; at its base was a large stone, overgrown with moss and lichens, and a little spring flowed from some broken and wet ground adjoining, shaded with a few rushes and tall sedge. There was a man seated on the stone, whose dress left the observer in some doubt as to his character and profession, but the appearance was, on the whole, that of a pilgrim, though, instead of being on foot, there was a stout hackney grazing by his side, whose saddle-girths he had just loosened, for the comfort of the animal, which he seemed to be as regardful of as his own. A crust of dry black bread, with a morsel of cheese, which he had taken out of a small wallet, was his repast, washed down by a draught of the little spring,—for it was the holy season of Lent, and if he had been

able to procure more sumptuous fare, he would probably have declined it.

“ Methinks I could, after all is considered, be almost content to envy that quiet pilgrim,” remarked William of Normandy to Robert Tyrrel, who was close to his side.

“ Now, Heaven forfend that your grace should have such a thought,” seriously cried his squire, “ when such a glorious career is open for us all. And who can tell what crimes that man may not be guilty of!—men do not take up the staff and sandals for nothing, I trow !”

“ It may be,” observed the former, “ though he looks not like one with a load on his conscience, if you mark his open, manly bearing. But how is this? Holy Virgin! I ought, surely, to know those features, and that scar on the old man’s forehead !”

The person he spoke of had been somewhat

surprised at the first appearance of a troop of forty or fifty armed men, without banner or device to shew who or what they were, and had the spot been a little nearer to the boundaries of the territories over which the King of England's power extended, he might have felt some cause for apprehension, but his astonishment was increased, when they approached closer, by their leader suddenly springing from his horse to the ground, and greeting him with all the expressions of the warmest friendship and respect, while he pressed the pilgrim's hand between his own mailed gloves.

It was Helie de St. Saen, who, enveloped in his disguise of a brown hood, had passed in safety through Normandy and Picardy, even in the immediate neighbourhood of Henry's encampments; and being now out of reach of that monarch, was on his way to the courts of the earls of Flanders or Anjou, in search of his

pupil, who had so unexpectedly fallen in with him.

The knights who accompanied William had, most of them, either heard of the high character St. Saen bore, or knew him personally, and all came round eagerly to welcome him, and shew their respect for the guardian of their Prince's youth. The old crusader was a brave and straightforward soldier, unskilled in the arts of intrigue or deception, and of uncompromising honesty ; and it is probable that Henry selected him to be entrusted with the charge of his nephew, after the unfortunate battle of Tenchebray, in order that his known high reputation might silence any evil reports in case of any accident befalling the boy, though he seemed afterwards to repent of his choice.

As the pilgrim proceeded to relate the various dangers and difficulties he had encountered in his search after the place of Duke Robert's

captivity, and the almost inaccessible towers where he had found him ; the difference between the way in which the prisoner appeared to be treated and the generous ideas of the age on the conduct which ought to be pursued towards a conquered enemy, even if unconnected by blood, excited general indignation among his hearers. Robert Tyrrel, who had listened attentively to the whole narration, was the first to suggest the scheme of attempting the deliverance of his godfather from the towers of Cardiff by means of the native Welch tribes, whose hatred of Fitz-Hamon and Henry's government would make them willing coadjutors. But the Knight of St. Saen, and two or three of the older heads of the party who agreed with him, damped the plan, by observing that the Welch aversion to their conquerors extended to *all* Normans indiscriminately, and it would be in vain to hope for any help from them ; nor, if they

could be depended upon, was it possible to arrive at the place of his imprisonment without a long journey through Henry's territories, or, at least, a coasting voyage along hostile shores, which would afford that vigilant monarch time to frustrate all their undertakings.

This heavy blow and deep discouragement fell painfully upon both William and his young sanguine friend, and the first felt a choking sensation in his throat at the idea of his father's situation, from which the pride of his sex and rank alone restrained him from finding relief in tears, while the spirits of all felt depressed at the prospect.

The evening was now drawing on, and there was some uncertainty among the troop as to where they were to pass the night, (for no town or village was in sight,) when suddenly one of

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tion was repeated, and accepted, with expressions of thanks for so seasonable an offer.

As they drew near to the castle there seemed to be no little commotion within; heads appeared and disappeared rapidly between the battlements of the towers, and at the loop-holes and windows. This did not escape the observation of the knights, who began to exchange glances with each other, and William noticed the unusual appearances to the daughter of De Catnoir. The demoiselle answered, with a smile,

“ It is that there are guests in the *château*, and one whom it will be not unpleasant to you to meet. Sir Helie de St. Saen is within these walls !”

The real St. Saen looked round at the other knights; they bit their lips, but there was no time to express their surprise or suspicion to each other, for they were already entering the

gateway as she spoke ; and if any manifestation of distrust appeared, it would have been but the work of a moment to let the portcullis fall, and cut them off from any assistance of their armed followers.

The master of the castle came hastily into the court-yard to receive them. There was a palleness on his countenance, and a hurried confusion in his manner as he did so, which would of itself have seemed strange in one about to receive a respected guest, had there not been any other cause of suspicion.

The first words he spoke were equally extraordinary. After expressing his pleasure at seeing so noble a guest, " This poor chateau of mine is but small, as your Grace may see," he said ;

I had not expected so large a train of knights and armed retainers, and much I fear we shall scarcely be able to find room for them, even if we can find provisions enough for the half of their number."

“ Nay, mind not that,” said William ; “ we are all of us used to sleep on the ground, and to be content with harder fare than I can suppose we shall find at the dwelling of a noble knight of France.”

“ Yet, if part of them could be satisfied to pass the night in a tent, outside the walls,” suggested the Sire de Catnoir, but without venturing to raise his eyes to the other’s face.

The young adventurer felt an indignant oath rising to his lips at this treacherous suggestion ; but St. Saen, to his surprise, interposed, and smoothed down matters, by acceding at once to the desire of the châtelain, that after their evening repast, they should pass the night on the grassy slope under the walls.

The astonishment of William of Normandy and the Comte d’Evreux at this arrangement was excessive, but being reassured by a look of intelligence from their companion, they followed

their host to the hall of the castle, while St. Saen remained behind a moment, and rapidly communicated his orders to every follower of their party on no account whatever to leave the walls till they again saw him and the young heir of Normandy in safety.

The old crusader had his reasons. He had caught a glimpse of an individual whom he had seen before in a distant spot from the one where they stood; he was not certain whether his orders to the men-at-arms had been overheard by this personage, who had slipped by him under a low archway, almost like a ghost or a spirit. St. Saen, however desirous he might be of following and questioning the man, had too cautious and old a head to push headlong after him in an unknown place, as a younger man might have done, and thought it best at present to follow in the steps of their entertainer to the interior of the building.



Chance, however, effected that for him which prudence had avoided. In a vaulted stone passage, at the end of which he heard steps and voices, he met, face to face, the person alluded to, bearing a lamp in his hand, which he immediately tried to extinguish and hurry by, as he recognised St. Saen, who still wore the dress and brown hood which he had disguised himself in during his visit to England. Escape was in vain, however, for he found himself in an instant fast held by the muscular grasp of the pilgrim, as if in an iron vice—it was Matthieu, the barber-surgeon of Cardiff, who was now forced to answer the questions which the other put to him, to avoid the risk of strangulation from the powerful hand on his throat, which pinned him to the wall, and prevented him from uttering more than a moderate whisper. From this man's unwilling lips the old knight learnt that, Fitz-Hamon being dead, he was transferred to

the service of the Sire de Catnoir ; that Duke Robert was more strictly watched and guarded than ever ; and other information, which was only wrung from him by a few words at a time. St. Saen felt an indescribable loathing at the touch and voice of this instrument of tyranny, and an equal longing to stop his breath for ever, as one would desire to crush a venomous reptile ; but he refrained ; and as other persons were entering the passage, he slackened his grasp, and allowed Matthieu to escape for a time.

Robert Tyrrel in the meanwhile had found an agreeable mode of passing the uncomfortable interval between the assemblage of the guests in the hall and the serving up the meal they anxiously expected, by entering into conversation with the daughter of their host, who was a beautiful girl, with a tinge of reserve and melancholy in the expression of her eyes, which at once fascinated him unconsciously. The uneasy sus-

pitions of D'Evreux and William of Normandy were, however, embarrassing enough, as they had not the least idea what plan or motives the knight of St. Saen could have for his apparently strange conduct, and the entrance of the latter was therefore a joyful occurrence to them. William merely announced "that he was an old and valued friend," without naming him; and their entertainer, who now seemed to have recovered his equanimity, with a courteous bow began to do the honours of his table, for the board was now covered with the dishes, and the appetites of the wanderer and his companions were sharpened by travelling and abstinence sufficiently to prevail over the uneasy feelings their situation caused.

When the repast was over, however, these recurred with double force from their momentary suspension, and the Count of Evreux threw more than one interrogatory glance towards him

of the brown hood, which the other affected not to notice.

As the evening wore on, the daughter of De Catnoir rose and retired, to the regret of Robert Tyrrel; and this seemed the signal for her father to rise and propose the “sleeping cup,” as it was called, prepared with wine, mulled with rich spices and honey, according to the old custom, at the separation of the guests for the night.

The massive silver cup was brought accordingly, and all stood up, while it was just placed at the lips of their host, which trembled and smiled at the same moment as they uttered—

“ Noble and illustrious Prince and Knights, who have honoured my poor house with your presence, we wish you all health and a night’s rest, both soft and *deep*.”

He presented the goblet to William of Normandy as he spoke, who was about to raise it

to his mouth, when Helie de St. Saen,—whose vigilant eye had detected the barber-surgeon busily gliding about in the shadow at the lower end of the apartment, and dropping something into the cup from a small flask he held in his hand,—suddenly rushed behind the Prince, and, with a dexterous twitch of his elbow, caused him to upset the whole of its contents on the floor. The Count of Evreux and the others started, and placed their hands on the hilts of their swords or daggers, ready to second anything that might be attempted; while consciousness of guilt made De Catnoir turn white as a corpse with fear and passion.

“Lord of Catnoir,” said St. Saen, indignantly, fixing his eye upon the other’s face, who quailed before him as he spoke, “thou hast sullied thy house by the blackest treachery, of which I accuse thee to thy teeth, thou stain to knighthood ! Thinking that this young Prince

would travel without attendants, thou hast been bribed by Henry of England to detain him a prisoner. Some accursed potion has been mixed in that cup by yonder tool of villainy to assist thy purpose. Deny it if thou canst."

"Am I to be insulted in my own hall by a nameless pilgrim?" cried the other, endeavouring to hide his consternation under a bullying exterior.

"I am Helie de St. Saen," was the reply; "he whose name thou hast misused to decoy us hither, and, but that the saints protected us, wouldest have succeeded."

"And how knowest thou that they *have* protected thee, Sir Knight of the Cowl and Beads," returned the other, with a triumphant sneer; and he blew a whistle, which hung at his girdle, as a signal for a number of his armed retainers to enter the room. "You are my prisoners, and your own men-at-arms are on the outside

of my portcullis ere now, too far off to help you!"

"They are *not!*" cried Helie, rushing to the window and putting his head out, as he shouted, in a voice which rung through the courts and passages, "Normandy to the rescue!"

The Comte d'Evreux, Robert Tyrrel, and others, immediately closed round the Prince, and in a few minutes the hall and passages were crowded with the followers of both parties, and echoing with the noises of the conflict.

The inhabitants of the chateau soon proved to be the weakest side, and in a short time its master was at the feet of William, imploring pardon, and promising to confess all, as also, his daughter, who came in terror from her apartment, with her hair dishevelled, and bathed in tears, while the other women ran backwards and forwards, increasing the confusion by their screams. The poor girl pleaded, with truth,

that she had no alternative but to obey the commands of her father, in becoming the innocent instrument of his designs, which she was utterly ignorant of.

De Catnoir confessed that he had been induced to undertake the course he had done by the promises and bribes of Henry, conveyed through the undignified medium of Matthieu, who had mixed a sleeping potion in the cup, in order to transfer the Prince and his friends to a dungeon, with more facility, that night ; but he frankly owned he had not anticipated so large a number of companions to our hero, which had, in fact, frustrated all.

William was inclined to forgive the attempt, but under condition that the châtelain should engage himself by a solemn oath never to molest or impede his cause in future, and to transfer his castle and territories (already forfeit to the victors in the late struggle) to his daughter, and

to bestow her hand upon Robert Tyrrell, and his eyes sparkled at the latter part of the conversation. It was also stipulated that Matthieu should be delivered over to William, to be hung in the highest turret of the castle, as a fit reward for his merits. But when search was made for that worthy, it was found that he had disappeared, in some unaccountable manner, during the confusion, and no traces were discovered of his mode of escape.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FESTIVAL.

“ The feast was spread, the sparkling bowl went round,
And to the assembled court the minstrels harped
The song of other days.”

JOAN OF ARC. SOUTHEY.

EASTER SUNDAY, that great universal festival of Christendom, had now arrived, and from the first dawn of day every steeple in Paris had been joining in the general expressions of joy sent forth from the towers of Notre Dame, and re-echoed by their fellow churches. The religious services of the morning were over, and the population was pouring along the streets in

search of gaiety and amusement. Some crossed the river, and exchanged, with delight, the close filthy streets of the “cité” for the cheerful fresh green meadows, extending from its banks to the abbeys of St. Germain and St. Genevieve.* Others crowded and pushed their way to the royal palace, on the banks of the Seine, where the King, according to the ancient custom of the French monarchy, held a feast in public, surrounded by his chief officers of state, and his various feudal dependents.

The lighthearted crowds pressed into the hall, which was ornamented with tapestry from the looms of Arras and Flanders. At the upper end sate the King, under a rich canopy of state, while the “grand panetiers, grand bouteilliers,” and other officials, discharged the duties of their places, with white wands in their hands.

* These meadows are now the Quartier du Luxembourg and Faubourg St. Germain.

Louis VI. was handsome and dignified in person, but his face wore constantly an unchangeable paleness, the effect of a dose of poison administered to him in his youth by his mother-in-law, the infamous Bertrude.

The French monarch was at this period about forty years of age, and had already acquired a good deal of that corpulency which procured for him in after years the surname, by which he is known, of "le Gros," though he was well deserving of some less absurd epithet, being a prince of character much superior to most of the sovereigns of those times. Just, wise, and patriotic, he had remedied, since his accession, a great part of the evils which his father's misgovernment had caused in the kingdom. The people loved him as their protector against the oppressions and violence of the nobles, which had reached to such a pitch at that time, that the Sire de Montmorency was

accustomed to lay waste and pillage, with armed men, the fields and villages between St. Denis and Paris, as far as the heights of Montmartre, and within sight of the very walls of the capital of his sovereign. Louis had made an example of this nobleman and others, nor did he stop here, for he caused equal justice to be rendered to the citizens and peasants (a thing previously unknown), lightened the taxes, conferred various municipal privileges on his subjects; and, in fact, seems to be the first French monarch who acted on a regular system of checking and reducing the power of the aristocracy.

Close to the King was placed a Benedictine, whose full sweeping black robes and cowl, with his head shaven close as well as his chin, exhibiting none of their natural covering of hair, formed a singular contrast to the festive and gorgeous scene, and the rich costumes which met the eye on every other side. It was Suger, the cele-

brated Abbot of St. Denis, the friend and adviser of Louis VI., and who afterwards became his historian, and regent of the kingdom. A band of minstrels and musicians was placed at some little distance, while some jesters and buffoons, who were admitted into the privileged space near the monarch's person, kept up a constant succession of roars of laughter among the bystanders, to the no small mortification of those near the entrance, who were not near enough to hear or see the jokes which every now and then provoked a smile on the countenance of the King, or even on the graver visage of the Abbot Suger.

Suddenly, during an interval of their mirth, a single blast of a trumpet made itself heard, and a commotion was visible at the great doors of the hall. The music ceased, and the courtiers looked at each other with curiosity as to what was about to follow, while the crowd divided on

each side to make way for some persons who had just arrived.

The first individual who entered was an old knight of about fifty, with a deep scar on his forehead, dressed in a long tunic of deep violet-coloured samite, immediately preceding a younger one, who rode into the hall in complete armour ; his surcoat was of the same dark colour as the first, in token of mourning ; and his helmet, of plain steel, completely unadorned, having the visor down, concealed his features from view. All present could not help admiring the grace and ease with which he managed his horse, a bright bay, whose dilated eyes and snorting nostril shewed his alarm at the crowded assemblage he was brought into. By his side walked two esquires, in snow-white tunics over their armour, as was customary for young men who had not yet had any opportunity of being engaged in battle. A page carried his shield

behind, which was entirely plain, without any device, but with the simple motto “*Dieu et mon droit*,” on a deep purple ground. The open doors of the hall shewed at the same time a considerable train of men, similarly cased in steel, who formed the rear of the party, and, though their persons were unknown, yet it was easy to be seen that they must be individuals of no mean birth or station.

Louis beheld the new comers with some curiosity, but it was then the age of romantic adventure and disguises, so that their unexpected appearance was less extraordinary in his eyes than we who live in more prosaic times should suppose. The Abbot Suger glanced toward his royal master with a look which shewed he was not entirely taken by surprise, or unacquainted with the person who led the way up to the King's footstool, where he bowed low, but immediately drawing himself up again, seemed to

wait, with folded arms, for some one to interrogate him. A profound silence prevailed.

“Who is this that comes in such unwonted guise to our royal hall at this holy and peaceful time, and what would ye with Louis of France?” asked the monarch, after some little pause.

“King of France! the world reports thee one who ever takes part with the injured against their oppressors,” was the reply; “one whose sword is drawn against tyranny and injustice, and to whom the weak cry not in vain against the mighty. Sir King, we are here to ask for assistance and justice on an uncle, who has despoiled the unoffending son of his brother of his inheritance, and detains that brother in the four walls of a narrow gloomy prison the whilst, treating him worse than a pagan follower of Mahound or Termagaunt would treat a Christian prisoner. Such is the errand which brings

us to thy presence with harness of steel, instead of the peaceful weeds fitting for a holy solemnity like this day's festival. Justice is what we ask for,—against one who is a powerful and a dangerous neighbour to thy own territories; between whom and thee there can be no peace, for you are rivals; and already thou hast drawn sword and couched lance against him, whom I call upon thee, as a belted Knight, and King crowned and anointed, to engage with in the holy and just cause of restoring the oppressed to his right."

"Thou speakest in riddles," observed Louis; "we must know in whose quarrel, and against whom, thou askest for help. Say it out who it is that hath done this oppression, and who claims succour at my royal hand."

"It is the son of one of the bravest and most generous of the Christian Princes who assisted to take the Holy City of Jerusalem from the

power of the infidels," answered he of the purple garment, who was, in fact, no other than St. Saen. "He who standeth here is William, the son of Duke Robert, by hereditary right Duke of Normandy, and lawful heir to the English crown, claiming justice against his usurping uncle, Henry, who now holds both unrightfully."

"We had heard something of this before," said King Louis; "and, by our Lady of Paris! we know Henry of England to be more wise than trustworthy, and one whom we like neither as a friend nor an enemy. But how sayest thou, Suger? Is it not better for both, and more be-seeming a Christian monarch, to be at peace with England, if we may?"

The Abbot of St. Denis shook his head, with a smile of ironical import.

"Truly, my Liege, I fear it is useless to talk of *peace*, when there is little or no chance of its

being ever sincerely wished for, or kept, between two such neighbours."

"Right, good Suger, thou speakest my own thoughts,—and now that the Earl of Flanders is dead, there is the more need for us to support the cause of this young man, which, by our Lady's help, we will do, and that right heartily. Call the grand-maître of our household, and let him take order for the lodging of our cousin of Normandy and his friends."

William expressed his thanks for the King's generosity in the warmest terms ; but the interchange of compliments between the princes was interrupted by one of the professional jesters, who thrust himself forward, with privileged impudence, and twisting his face into a grotesque grimace, began to address the King, as follows :—

"Canst tell me, Compère Louis, the difference between a wise man and a fool ?"

“ Dost not know it thyself ?” said the King.

“ Marry, it appears to be this,” said the jester ; “ it is that a fool looks like what he is, and the wise man like what he is not.”

“ How so, sirrah ?”

“ Because, an’ if I had not been told the contrary, I should have thought, in my poor simple brain, that these knights seemed able enough and ready enough to run a tilt for righting themselves, without thy help, Compère !”

“ Bah ! Cocqueton, thou art but a dull fool to day, and protest about thou knowest not what.”

“ Now, see there,” said Cocqueton, in a whining tone ; “ when I would fain play the part of a wise man, I get nothing but the name of a fool. Truly this long Lent has spoilt my wits clean and entirely. I must take counsel of my namesake here.”

So saying, he pounced upon a fowl, which

the stewards had just placed upon the royal table, and skipped off with his prize to a corner of the hall, having managed to raise a laugh by this piece of practical wit, not the less successfully from the vexation the “grand-panetier” in attendance shewed on his dignified face, as he grumbled indignantly at the liberty taken with what was under his own department.

“I marvel how our Lord the King can bear with such a knave as that, who lacks wit to excuse his impertinence!”

The King received the Count of Evreux and Helie de St. Saen with great apparent pleasure, as well as the others who were named to him, but when the esquires in white tunics were in their turn presented to him, the monarch and Suger looked at each other with a gloomy shade on their countenance, while William of Normandy related the reception he had met with at Poix. Louis, however, was more willing to

receive them graciously, than the abbot, who bent his brows with some severity, as if he thought their father's stain of homicide reflected upon them; and he turned to St. Saen, who was his old friend and acquaintance, with a denunciation from Scripture against the posterity of the slayer of his fellow-creature.

“Nay, reverend father,” said Helie, “you are overzealous in this matter. I will be gage, if need be, for the truth and loyalty of these youths, who are surely not deserving of censure for what chanced before their birth.”

“I swear to you, most reverend abbot,” interrupted Robert Tyrrel, with eager haste,—“I swear to you that my father is innocent, and free of all guilt in the death of Red William; I have often and often heard him call Heaven and its saints to witness, he had rather have lost his own life than that it should have happened as it did. For what was his *involuntary* share, he

has done penance at the Holy Sepulchre long ago ; and the Duke of Normandy has held him free and guiltless of that deed, by receiving him with favour and granting him lands and forest rights."

" Thy speech is somewhat free, young Sir, in this royal and reverend presence," observed the Knight of St. Saen ; " nevertheless, he speaks truly, my lord abbot, and I would that his Prince, as well as his Majesty of France, had many more such true and loyal hearts among their followers."

The minister contented himself with gravely making a slight inclination of the head in return ; for (although a man of very considerable talents and knowledge of the world, as well as of sincere piety and learning,) the early part of his life having been passed in the recesses of a cloister, his genius had been, in some degree, inevitably narrowed and cramped, while his feel-

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the unfortunate captive of Cardiff restored to the duchy of Normandy, nay, even to the English throne, and his uncle, King Henry, prostrate at the feet of Louis of France, and Suger, who enjoined him for penance to go barefooted to the sepulchre at Jerusalem.

But the next morning brought realities with it of a different and far less pleasing complexion. Intelligence was brought to the King that the English monarch had been successful in various skirmishes on the frontiers of Normandy against the troops of the Earl of Flanders and of Louis, who opposed him in that line of country.

The next day news still more disastrous and startling arrived, and the newly-formed hopes of the young adventurer seemed about to be crushed in the bud, when it was announced that King Henry had formed an alliance with Foulques, Count of Anjou, and a marriage

contract was arranged between the heir of Henry's crown and the young daughter of the Count; but, in order that the reader may comprehend the circumstances in which these personages stood, it will be necessary to give here a slight sketch of their political situations.

At the period in which this story is laid, the sovereigns of France, though nominally lords of its territory, possessed in fact only the Orléanais, Berri, Picardy, and the Isle de France, forming scarcely one sixth part of the kingdom their successors afterwards acquired. The rest of the French soil was divided among a number of independent counts and nobles, more or less powerful, some of whom owed a merely nominal allegiance to the King, while the whole of Normandy belonged to England, whose possession of it threatened daily, from the vigorous talents and policy of its present ruler, to

prove an overmatch for the crown of Louis, enfeebled by circumstances as the latter felt himself to be.

His interests therefore led him to espouse the cause of the new claimant to the duchy of Normandy ; and the Earls of Flanders and Anjou had entered into his views, and formed a sort of league against the encroachments of England. Foulques, or Fulk, Count of the fertile province of Anjou, was tempted, it appears, to take advantage of this unsettled state of things, and assume for himself the state of an independent sovereign by joining Henry, and throwing off all allegiance to the French crown, from one of whose former sovereigns the country had been granted to his own ancestors as a feudal investment or fief. This defection was the more sensibly felt, as young William of Normandy had, as we have seen, been educated at his court, (for the great feudal nobles imitated the

state of monarchs), and there had hitherto been no warmer friend of his claims than the Earl, who now adopted the alliance of his enemy, seduced by the eloquence of Henry, and the prospect of seeing his daughter the future Queen of England. Should the other feudatories of the crown take the same course, from whatever cause, the French King saw that it would soon become out of his power, not only to help others, but to preserve his own territories and independence, notwithstanding his utmost efforts.

But there was *another* power existing, to whom Louis had ever paid deference and respect, whose influence extended from the shores of the Baltic to those of the Mediterranean, and before whom the haughtiest monarchs found themselves obliged to bend, in unwilling deference to its decrees, to an extent unknown in these later times. This was, the Church, whose

power of fulminating interdicts and excommunications, and absolving subjects from their allegiance (which has never yet been renounced or disclaimed by the court of Rome), was *then* no empty or speculative attribute, but an engine of real and tremendous efficacy, in the hands of ambitious pontiffs. An example of this had been lately given. When the pope had excommunicated Robert King of France, a prince of valour and piety, on account of his divorce and subsequent marriage, contrary to the canons of the church, the kingdom was laid under an interdict; divine service was suspended; the churches closed; the dead interred without funeral rites; marriages could not be celebrated; infants remained unbaptized (except in cases of immediate danger); and the person of the excommunicated monarch was shunned even by his nearest friends and relations, who refused to speak to or eat with him. Such sentences had been

actually carried into effect, and the most spirited princes of the age might well recoil from incurring the consequences of neglecting or despising the power of such a weapon, backed and supported as it was by the superstition of those times. Louis determined, as a last resort, to appeal to the spiritual influence of the triple crown. Callistus II., who was newly elected pope, was of French birth, being a younger brother of the house of Burgundy, and uncle to his Queen, Adelais. He had been Archbishop of Vienne, in Dauphiny, and was now about to hold a council at Rheims against the Emperor of Germany and Bourdin the pretender to the popedom, whom the last-named sovereign had put in possession of the city of Rome. The character of the new pontiff made it probable that the thunders of the church would not slumber idly in his hands, while his near connexion with the consort of Louis himself

seemed to augur well for any application made by the latter, even in any cause which had less of justice and equity to recommend it than that of our young adventurer.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNCIL.

King.—“ When I have said, make answer to us
Lo, in this right hand, whose protectio
Is most divinely vowed upon the right
Of him it holds, stands young Plantag
Son to the elder brother of this man.”

K. JOHN, ACT. II. SC. I

THE sun was just going down among the
clouds, coloured with many-shifting hues
intermediate tints between the deepest o
red and the most delicate pale purple, and
last rays lighted up the massive towers
ancient and famous city of Rheims, w
Gothic cathedral, while the lower part
town was already buried in deep shadow.

persons had just arrived among the numerous and varied throng which was attracted from all quarters by the meeting of the great ecclesiastical council then assembled within the walls, who seemed as if they had little in common with the other groups, who were every half-hour arriving to swell the already crowded mass of human beings. One was a young female, whose dress bespoke destitution, but at the same time a certain air of nobility, riding on a shabby-looking tired mule, at whose rein walked a man of middle age, handsome and dignified in his person, and seeming to be of a higher rank than his present condition indicated ; there was altogether something about them which at once excited and checked curiosity and impertinence. It was evident that they were embarrassed to find lodgings in the city ; it might be that they were conscious of being but scantily supplied with money, and yet the father of the girl, for

such seemed to be their relationship, was unwilling to allow his charge to put up with accommodations inferior to what she had probably been used to ; and they wandered accordingly through the steep and crooked streets without any apparent direction beyond that of chance. As they came at last to a momentary pause, uncertain where to turn, a young man, mounted on a spirited charger, and bearing the cognizance of three golden lions on his tunic, passed close to them, and looked round with a careless glance at the dusty and travel-soiled individuals we have described. He pulled up his horse instantly, and sprung to the ground by their side. The mutual recognition was startling, at least to one party, for the damsel on the mule was no other than Berthilde, accompanied by her father, Sir Walter ; and the young man, who expressed the greatest amazement at meeting them in that place, and in such an unex-

pected condition, was her brother, Robert Tyrrel, who formed part of the numerous train which had accompanied the King of France and William of Normandy into the town a few days before.

As, however, the disjointed answers to his various and eager questions, while he was conducting them towards the quarters where they were likely to meet a kind reception from those Princes, would give but a confused idea of the occurrences which had taken place; we prefer giving a short narrative to explain how they were found at Rheims, in such a reduced situation.

As soon as the party which escorted William of Normandy from the gates of Poix towards Paris had left the court of the manoir, Berthilde retired to her turret chamber, where she had so often indulged in melancholy and bitter reveries on her peculiar lot, in order to watch from the

window the departing cavalcade as long as possible. She remained wrapped up in her own thoughts for some time after their disappearance, waiting for her father's return, when, on a sudden, one of the few servants who remained in the building came with terrified haste, and informed her that a large force of armed men was rapidly approaching the manoir from the opposite side, towards the Norman frontier. The Demoiselle de Poix looked out accordingly, and saw them, in fact, already ascending the chalk hill on which the village stands. Several knights' pennons were visible in front of their ranks, and their numbers were much superior to the little band which formed the escort of our adventurer. The peril was imminent. She had no means of defence beyond what consisted in the strength of the doors, which she caused to be immediately barred and bolted, at least, till she could discover their pur-

pose and errand ; for she and a few terrified female domestics now formed the only garrison, all the men capable of bearing arms being absent, or attached to the train of young William of Normandy.

They had not long to wait before the leaders rode up to the gate, preceded by a herald, to reconnoitre, and to make their demand. Its substance was, that the justiciary of Rouen, with Thomas Fitz-Stephen and other knights, acting by the authority of Henry, King of England, required William of Normandy to be delivered up to them, in order to be replaced under his uncle's guardianship.

Berthilde, with the quickness and presence of mind of her sex, saw the necessity of detaining them as long as possible, to give time for the party of the Pretender to get beyond their reach. She accordingly caused an old man, who had remained behind, to place himself near the

wicket, in order that her own feminine might not betray the weakness of her garrison. The herald, irritated at the which elapsed without any reply to his re summons, at last received an evasive answ the effect, that Louis of France was soverei that part of the country, and denying the of the other monarch to consider the young as his ward. After some time spent in fru negotiations, the signal for attacking the m was given, but the assailants, to their sur found no living creature to oppose them, a rusty old spears and empty helmets, place different apertures, to make a show, was all they encountered. The massive oak d resisted their efforts to break through for space of more than an hour, since their m had been too rapid to bring with them batte rams, or other engines of warfare, hoping take Poix by surprise. At length, howe

faggots and straw were brought from the little village, whose inhabitants had fled in terror, and being heaped up against the entrance, fire was applied to several places at once. The unfortunate inmates now cried out that they surrendered ; but the attacking party, thinking it a stratagem, burst in over the flaming embers as soon as the outer defences gave way, and found, to their infinite mortification, that half a dozen helpless females were the whole and sole force which had baffled their enterprize for the present. The justiciary stamped and swore at his disappointment, which was shared by his accompanying knights ; but our friend Fitz-Stephen, when their loud threats of vengeance and wrath were at the highest, could not help laughing at the check they had met with, though as much vexed himself as any one. The others, who at first were inclined to turn their anger to the author of this so unseasonable merriment,

soon perceived the ridicule of their situation, and allowed him to persuade them to let their feminine opponents go free and unhurt.

But in the meantime the buildings were destroyed by the flames, and when Walter Tyrrel returned, after some hours' absence, he found nothing but the blackened walls of his ruined home, his lands pillaged, and his daughter without a shelter for her head. They had no course but one, and that they took, which was, to follow in the track which the Knight of Poix had already traversed in the morning, with very different feelings, in order to seek assistance from the French monarch. On reaching the neighbourhood of the capital, however, they found that Louis had already departed for Rheims: and after a journey, long, and filled with difficulties and privations of all kinds, they had at last arrived in the metropolis of Champagne. Such was the narration, which Robert

interrupted, at intervals, with hasty ejaculations of surprise and wrath, whilst he was conducting them through the narrow and winding lanes that led towards the residence of the prelate of that city, where Louis VI. had taken up his temporary abode.

The next morning, the steep streets of the ancient city of Rheims presented a busy and varied prospect, of novelty to the sight of Berthilde, who had scarcely ever before left her paternal roof. Bishops were to be seen on every side in their pontifical robes, mounted on sleek, sober-looking palfreys, or mules, whose comfortable condition well corresponded with the demeanour of their dignified riders, who were preceded by stout grooms or serving men, in buff leather coats, armed with long staves, and shouting to make way for their lords through the crowd. There were fat rosy abbots and priors, in a darker monastic costume, from

the well-endowed convents of Flanders and Alsace. In another direction, pale, enthusiastic looking Italian monks and notaries of the Romish courts contributed to swell the throng, while here and there a secular count or baron would spur his horse up or down the rough, ill-paved slope of the thoroughfare, clattering through the more peaceful part of the throng, with jingling spurs, and furred cloak waving behind him.

The continued ringing of bells and confusion of sounds increased the tumult of the scene, through the midst of which Callistus himself was seen advancing, seated in a chair, borne aloft upon men's shoulders, with the papal tiara glittering on his proud forehead, followed by a train of cardinals in their scarlet robes, and with an enormous plume or fan of white feathers carried on each side of him, giving a tinge of oriental appearance to the dignity he possessed.

All heads were respectfully bared, as the chief of the western church passed on to the massive and elaborately ornamented front of the pile of building which forms the cathedral of Notre Dame, whose great folding doors opened wide at his approach, and the pontiff with his pompous suite were soon lost to view, as they entered the deep shadow of the portal. The throng was, however, so dense, that our travellers had great difficulty in making their way to the interior, and the council had been sitting for more than an hour, when they at last succeeded.*

* The Council of Rheims had been occupied in discussing the question which had proved the fruitful source of quarrel between the church and the emperors ever since the time of Gregory VII.,—namely, that of the right of temporal princes to confer ecclesiastical benefices; and a canon was agreed to by the assembly, absolutely forbidding the investiture of bishoprics or abbacies by the hands of a layman. The question seems to have been, substantially, no other than what is so vehemently contended for by some persons in Scotland, at the present day—the abolition of lay

The scene which met the eye was magnificent and imposing. The lofty building was thronged in every part with the multifarious assemblage, and the choir was completely filled with the prelates of the council, in mitres and copes, four hundred and twenty seven in number, with Callistus presiding, under a rich canopy of state. Louis of France was likewise there, seated on a throne prepared for his use, surrounded by his lay peers, and wearing the royal crown and robes, with William of Normandy on his right hand. Each bishop and abbot was standing up, with a lighted taper held in his hand, whilst the sonorous voice of Callistus was heard, in the act of pronouncing a solemn sentence of excommunication against the antipope Bourdin, and

patronage, which was denounced by councils in the twelfth century, as a detestable and anti-scriptural enormity, with the same zealousness, and in almost the same terms, as it is now condemned in the nineteenth.

against the Emperor Henry of Germany. As soon as the pope ceased, the four hundred and twenty seven prelates threw to the ground and extinguished the blazing tapers they held ; and in the midst of the sudden smoke and stench which succeeded the brilliant glare of the moment before, the terrible words were proclaimed,—“ So let their light be put out, and their souls plunged into the corrupt noisomeness of the infernal pit, unless they repent and come to make reparation !”*

A deep silence succeeded ; for the solemn effect of the ceremony had impressed every one present with a chilly sensation of undefinable awe, and the clergy resumed their seats with an air of quiet and unimpassioned triumph.

After a short interval the council appeared

* “ *Nisi paenituerint et ad satisfactionem venerint !*” are the concluding words of the form, which was actually used on such occasions.

about to break up ; when the King of France suddenly rose, and making a gesture to require attention, addressed the pontiff as follows :—

“ Holy Father ! there is yet another matter which calls for the attention of this reverend council. You have, in the exercise of your power as successor of St. Peter, thought fit to call down the thunders of the church upon a prince who refuses to come to any accommodation regarding the investiture of bishoprics and abbacies. I question not the justice of his sentence ; but there is *another* prince, equally culpable, and that in this very matter of investitures. Remember ye not, holy father, what services Duke Robert of Normandy has rendered to the church ? and how much his arm contributed to recovering the Holy Sepulchre from the infidels ? He sought not, like so many others, to evade the fulfilment of his vow, when he had once taken up the blessed sign of the

cross, but did his devoir as a true knight and Christian soldier in the cause, under the burning sun of Palestine. And what have been the consequences to him? His brother Henry has usurped his dominions; and what is more, detains that unfortunate Duke in a close and shameful captivity. If proof be wanted, there stands here a knight to testify to the unbrotherly treatment he receives, (pointing to St. Saen.) Ought you not, fathers of the council, to consider that unhappy Prince as deserving the special protection of the church, and her interference in his behalf? The secular barons of Normandy are ready to lay lance in rest, for the cause of the son of their ill-treated Duke, and there is wanting only your spiritual authority to support the just and righteous cause of the oppressed. I ask your sentence in favour of this young Prince, who inherits his father's bravery and devotion, that he may be reinstated

in his heritage, detained from him with such manifest injustice by an usurping uncle, to whom the ties of blood are as nothing. Can there be a difference of opinion on this? And Henry of England is no obedient son of the church. Remember his disputes with the holy Archbishop Anselm, and how the late Pope Paschal had threatened him with excommunication for his unyielding obstinacy in this matter of conferring bishoprics; nor is he likely to give way in future. Let then this sentence, so long deferred, fall at once on the head that full richly merits it; for by so doing you will justly punish the detainer of one of the most eminent champions of the cross!"

All eyes were turned upon William of Normandy as the King spake. The public appeal of Louis excited a general feeling of indignation against Henry, and sympathy with the young man, whose noble demeanour of itself would

have interested many in his cause. Several of the spectators could not be restrained by reverence for the sanctity of the spot and occasion from expressing their feelings audibly.

All were hushed, however, when Callistus—who had felt some little difficulty in preventing the embarrassment he experienced from becoming visible upon his features during the King's speech—prepared himself to answer.

“Louis of France!” said the pontiff, “we feel, and deeply lament, the calamities which have fallen upon Duke Robert so undeservedly, but yet we doubt not that Heaven may one day, in its own good time, release him. Neither are we disposed to deny the just rights of this young man to his dominions; and the sin be upon his head who deprives him of the inheritance of his fathers. But although we have a high and holy charge transmitted to our unworthy hand, by succession from the chief of

the apostles, yet it behoves us to be so much the more cautious in making use of the power of the keys without due deliberation. We must therefore take counsel, and consider further, concerning this matter ; the more especially as the King of England has sent ambassadors, holy and pious bishops, who bear his salutation to our unworthy person, and the expression of his deference to the apostolical precepts. It would ill beseem that meekness of which the humble occupier of the chair of St. Peter should always set an example, thus rudely to reject an erring sheep from the fold, at the moment, may be, when he humbly and penitently seeks admittance. Nevertheless, it is a matter not to be over-hastily determined, and we will accordingly examine it further at our leisure."

So saying, Callistus rose from his seat, and hastily put an end to the session, among mur-

murs of disapprobation from various sides, in order to allow no opportunity of reply to Louis, and those who stood near him, or felt interested in the cause of our adventurer. Astonishment and vexation at the unexpected evasiveness of the pontiff had, however, rendered them mute for the moment, taking advantage of which, the holy father hurried towards the door, and quitted the cathedral with considerably more precipitation than he had shewn in entering it.

Helie de St. Saen, meantime, was cursing the tumultuous crowds, who now began to move in various directions, for he had a fresh source of mortification besides what was in common with the rest of William's friends, for as the pope concluded his reply, a countenance had suddenly caught his eye, half concealed behind the draperies of the pontifical throne, on which, though long accustomed to repress all signs of emotion, there appeared a triumphantly ma-

licious smile as its glances were directed towards the spot where he stood, to observe the effect of the words of the pontiff.

St. Saen tried to make a rush towards the place, intending to seize the individual; but the masses of human beings were too densely wedged together for him to be able to penetrate, in spite of all his desperate efforts; and he had the infinite mortification to find that Matthieu, the barber-surgeon, had again successfully eluded his grasp, having disappeared among the crowd of mitred prelates whose persons were interposed between him and the disappointed knight.

'The pontiff had made good his retreat, and entered the ancient and venerable walls of the monastery of St. Remi, celebrated as being the place of sepulture of that prelate, and where his relics, as well as the famous Sainte Ampoule,

containing the miraculous oil with which the kings of France were anointed at their coronation, were preserved with religious care by the prior and brethren. Callistus, whose conscience probably smote him in some degree for his avoiding to pronounce in favour of the legitimate claims of the son of Duke Robert, had given orders that no one should be admitted during the rest of the day : as he feared that Louis would expostulate further with him, and by no means desired that discussion should be brought forward. The truth was that he saw little chance of the young adventurer making good his pretensions, and thought it more useful to his interest to keep terms with Henry, if possible ; the latter had, in fact, made the most liberal promises, and propitiated the pontiff with splendid presents of jewelled chalices, rich vestments, and other precious gifts ; and as Callistus cast his eye round the walls of his

apartment, and viewed the treasures which had been conveyed thither by the Bishops of Lincoln and Rochester, through the instrumentality of the ever-serviceable and unscrupulous Matthieu, the arguments and remonstrances of King Louis, if they recurred at all, faded away again without making any effectual impression on his mind ; yet, after all, it may be doubted whether Callistus was naturally mercenary or unjust. He probably excused his conduct to himself by the adoption of that maxim of the Romish court which has been always found so useful and convenient to worldly-minded ecclesiastics, that everything is permitted to be done by which the interests of the church may be benefited, and that all minor considerations must give way accordingly. As the junior of a noble house, the fifth son of a Count of Burgundy, he had been early dependent upon his own exertions and talents alone for

making his way in the world, in which he fully succeeded by attaining the summit of his earthly ambition. We must not be surprised, therefore, if we find a man of his ambitious turn and worldly character (encouraged as he was by the corrupt court which surrounded him), steadily pursuing the aim and object of extending and confirming the privileges of his see, without much scruple at the means to be employed ; and flattering were the encomiums he received from his favoured attendants on the dexterity he had displayed on the occasion in question. Yet he shewed himself not insensible to the calls of justice or right feeling in the conduct he afterwards took with regard to our hero. But we must not anticipate.

It was evening, and Callistus had been now, for some time, alone, revolving in his mind the events of the day in which he had borne so principal a part, and musing upon the future

prospects of the church, for whose privileges he had so vigorously contended, and whose welfare was so intimately bound up with his own extension of the spiritual power.

Suddenly he heard a noise, unusual in the quiet precincts of a monastery, and so near the presence of the successor of St. Peter. It was evident that the attendants were trying to prevent some one from entering, whose voice, as it was heard in passionate expostulation, seemed to the ears of the pope to be that of a woman.

Surprised at the extraordinary intrusion, Callistus, having listened for a few moments, rose from his seat, and proceeded, himself, to the door, to discover the cause of the unwonted sounds, to which his presence, as he appeared in the archway, put an immediate stop.

The person whose entrance the monks were endeavouring to prevent was evidently of the softer sex, by the quantity of hair which had

escaped in the contention from under the large hood of a heavy cloak, that seemed adopted purposely to disguise the figure and dress of the wearer. Muffled in its dark folds, she had contrived, after the services in the church were ended (at which the pontiff had not been present), to glide into the interior of the monastery, favoured by the twilight, though her further progress to his presence was impeded by the immediate attendants of Callistus.

As soon as the figure of the pope became visible, the intruder burst from those who surrounded her, and throwing herself at his feet, seized his garments with a firm grasp, and raising the hem to her lips, kissed it with devout respect.

“ How is this, daughter ? ” cried the pontiff with some displeasure, as he tried in vain to extricate his robe from the small hands that held it. “ What means this unseemly intrusion ? Knowest

thou not that any female who presumes to penetrate into these consecrated recesses, incurs the penalty of excommunication ?”

“ Hear me, holy father,” replied the girl, “ for I will not rise from this spot till you have at least heard my cry for justice. Hear me—for to thee are intrusted the keys of earth and heaven, and though thou didst refuse to hear the voice of King Louis, when he claimed their exercise in a righteous cause, thou shalt at least hear my humble entreaty. Oh ! remember, holy father, that there is one of the noblest and bravest princes in Europe languishing in a noisome dungeon at this very moment, in the chains of an usurper ; while a few words from thy mouth could influence his fate. Oh think, should it ever chance to be thine *own* lot to fall into the hands of him who usurps thine authority at Rome, how wouldest thou regret having turned a deaf ear to the sufferings of another,

and refused to aid the just cause when it was in thy power!"

Callistus looked at her with surprise and confusion at this unexpected appeal. The monks exclaimed, "She is mad!" endeavouring at the same time to lay hold of her; but she continued to cling to the pope's feet, who made a sign to them to desist.

"O think but once," she resumed, observing the effect of her earnest entreaties,—"think but once on what unworthy treatment the King of England makes his brother undergo; think of the just and undoubted rights of that brother's son, and canst thou then refuse *justice*, when thy own authority is disputed by an intruder into the holy see? O! how all men will bless thy memory, if thy interference assists the innocent and helpless in the cause of justice and right!"

"Nay but, daughter," began the pontiff, "thou knowest not the difficulty of this matter;

we must take counsel and consult with others concerning it."

"Oh, take counsel of your own heart alone! holy father," was the answer; "thou art the vicar upon earth of Him who never refuses to listen to the poor. Thou wilt not sanction injustice? It cannot be!"

"And who art thou, daughter? resumed Callistus, who pleadest so earnestly in this cause? How does it concern thee?"

It matters not who I am," returned the damsel, "if my request is just;" and her eyes began to fill with tears as she spoke. There is something in the sight of a woman weeping (although the attraction of beauty may be wanting, as it was in this case), which appeals powerfully to the heart of every man, however sternly he may determine to set his face against giving way. The pontiff was taken by surprise; and, in spite of the dictates of his former cautious policy, was

prevailed upon, by the urgency of her entreaties, to consent to interfere, on behalf of William, so far as to promise to use his personal influence with Henry to cause him to soften the rigour of his brother's imprisonment; and to press him, under the threat of ecclesiastical censures, to give up a part at least of Normandy to his nephew. The monks who stood by, however unaccustomed to witness the violent workings of human passions, and steeled by their conventional life against sympathy, yet could not avoid feeling an interest in the girl, who, now that the interview was over, in which her highly-wrought feelings had supported her, was obliged to lean against the wall to recover herself before she was able to move from the spot. Various were the surmises, and great the curiosity, of the religious to ascertain her name and rank; but it was in vain, for they had not the previous knowledge of circumstances that our readers enjoy, which

have already most probably made them a
that it could be no other person than
Demoiselle of Poix, who adopted this some
unmaidenly course to assist the cause for w
success she so earnestly wished.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE.

“ *Ne scais tu pas qu’aux échecs on ne prend jamais le Roy ?* ”—**EXCLAMATION OF LOUIS VI.**

PICARDY, and the adjacent frontiers of Normandy, had now become the theatre of war. Many of the nobles of the latter province, who had not ventured hitherto to declare in favour of their young Prince, now, on his standard being reared in conjunction with that of Louis of France, flocked round and swelled his retinue to several times the number which had followed him from Poix. The French King, indignant at the duplicity visible in the conduct of the

Earl of Anjou and the pope, had summoned such of his vassals as either were willing to accompany him, or whom he was able to compel to do so; for the remainder, as usual, took what course best pleased themselves. The frontier stronghold of Gisors had been taken from the English monarch by Louis; Andelys yielded to their arms; and our adventurer soon found himself the temporary master of the country on the banks of the Seine, even as far as within sight of the gates of Rouen. He was now proclaimed in the camp Duke of Normandy; and part of his father's and grandfather's inheritance already owned him for its lord.

Henry, on the other side, was not idle. He assembled a mixed army of English and Normans, and his adversaries soon found they had no despicable enemy to contend with. He led his troops, with the rapidity of the wind, from one quarter to another; and many a village

which had in the morning submitted to its legitimate duke, was surprised before the sun went down by the presence of the King of England, or a party led by one of his knights, and obliged to change masters once more.

But it is not necessary to recapitulate here all the trifling skirmishes which occupied the course of that summer, in which one day the uncle, the next the nephew, seemed to gain the advantage, as the wheel of the fickle goddess was inclined one way or the other ; but the unfortunate peasantry were constantly the sufferers in either case.

The camp of the English monarch was fixed near the city of Noyon, on the margin of the valley where a tributary stream pours itself into the Oise. The city itself was won, and the civic authorities had presented its keys submissively to King Henry.

It was the 20th of August, and the wheat was

more than fully ripe for the sickle ; but instead of neatly shorn stubble and stacks of new corn which ought to have met the eye, the produce of the earth lay prostrate and neglected on its surface, for where the tide of war flows, no cheerful harvest is gathered in.

Some of the peasantry of the neighbouring plain of Brenneville, who had taken refuge in the borders of the great forest of Compiègne, were looking out over the neglected fields, anticipating the times of scarcity and privation which the winter would bring with it ; they had almost determined, as they sorrowfully gazed, to return at any risk, and try to harvest some of their corn, for all seemed tranquil in the direction of the encampment of King Henry. Suddenly, the sound of a bugle, winded in a low tone, came to their ears from the woodland behind them, and as they looked, they saw the gleaming of steel caps and lances where the sunbeams fell

through the intervals of the thick forest. They dispersed with a cry of alarm, but not before some of their number had been laid hold of by the men-at-arms who formed the van of the approaching forces, and brought into the presence of their leaders.

The peasants prostrated themselves before a group of riders, cased in glittering steel, who had paused for a moment under the branches of an enormous oak. The foremost seemed of a size and bulk beyond the common race of men, and the small circlet or coronal of gold which surrounded his polished helmet, as well as the blue surcoat, thickly studded with fleurs-de-lis, or spear heads, announced that it was Louis VI., who was so continually engaged, during the whole of his reign, in contests, either with his own rebellious vassals or foreign enemies, that it was said he scarcely knew what it was to sleep for two nights together out of his armour.

“What are ye afraid of, ye faint-hearted curs!” cried one of the group; “stand up and answer King Louis’ questions, or I will prick ye with the point of my lance till we get a reply.” And the Count of Evreux, for it was no other, was about to suit the action to the word; but his arm was arrested by the young Duke of Normandy.

“Stay, cousin of Evreux! thou wilt but frighten them the more. Tell us, friend,” he continued, addressing the peasant, “tell us in which direction lays the camp of Henry of England, and at what distance from Noyon. Fear not to be injured, if thou dost but speak truly.”

The man replied by pointing out the spot where the encampment lay, and added, that the army had been remaining quiet for so many days, that they almost hoped the war was ended with the espousals.

“ How now !—of what espousals speakest thou ?” asked the hasty Count of Evreux.

“ Of those of the son of the King of England, Monseigneur, with the heiress of Anjou ; they say it was a strange sight to see the poor child, in her white garb, brought into the midst of armed men, for the ceremony of her fiançailles.”

“ The heiress of Anjou !” repeated King Louis ; “ I see my brother of England thinks it best to lose no time in clenching the nail. By my faith, he is in the right of it to make sure of her and her father, *if he can*. But is the damsel now in their camp, or at Noyon ?”

“ They took the child back to her convent but two days back, Sire,” was the answer.

“ Ha ! 'twas pity we fell not in with them on the way, before the girl reached its holy walls,” said D’Evreux, “ or your Grace might have won back the heiress for yourself ; for, if I mis-

take not, she was *your* promised bride," turning to William of Normandy.

The latter assented; and a hasty council was held on the spot, when it was resolved that the King of France, with William of Normandy, the Count of Evreux, and others, in all about four hundred lancers, should instantly push on across the plain of Brenneville, to endeavour to surprise the city of Noyon, whose fortifications were by no means insurmountable.

This resolution being made, Louis looked round with pride at the gallant knights who surrounded him—they were waiting for a signal. He took a lance from the esquire who was nearest him, waved it in the air, and touching his gigantic black horse with the spur, caused him to prance and curvet for a few minutes, till his rider, relaxing the reins, dashed on at a canter, at the head of his chosen bands, in the direction of the city.

It seemed that the English monarch had some reasons for supposing his antagonists were not far off, for as they gained the summit of a little eminence which sloped away again gently on the other side, they saw Henry, with his best lancers surrounding him in about equal numbers to those who accompanied young William, proceeding on a reconnoitring expedition between them and the city. Each party halted for a moment, and gazed at their opponents as if to measure the chances of an engagement. The distance between them was about a quarter of a mile, and the advantage of the ground in favour of William and King Louis. The pause was but of short duration ; for while Henry still hesitated, the shouts of loud and confused war-cries burst from the party of our adventurer, and the next moment their forces were sweeping down the slope with an impetus which nothing could resist.

The shock was, in fact, tremendous, and the

lances of the assailants flew in splinters on every side when they encountered the solid iron plates which guarded the chests and heads of the horses, or the large triangular shields of their riders. Though Henry was surrounded by the bravest of the chivalry of his dominions, and their heavy sheathing of links or “mascles” of steel network preserved them from personal injury, yet it was impossible to keep their ground against the violence of the charge ; they were driven back by the first onset, and lances being now useless, a confused “melée” ensued, when heavy cross-handled swords, ponderous battle-axes, &c., rained blows on all sides, and it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe (save by the blazonry of their arms), so completely had the two hosts become mingled together.

The Count of Evreux had charged, with the impetuosity of his character, side by side with William of Normandy and King Louis, in the

foremost rank, and, hurried on by his enthusiasm, had forced his way into the thickest of the contest, when he saw, not far in advance of him, a tall knight, with a small coronet of gold round his helmet, and a second, of a slighter figure, and more gaily-attired, fighting by his side with determined bravery. It needed not the lions on their surcoats to inform D'Evreux that they were no other than the King of England and his son. Dashing the spurs into his horse's flanks, he made his way to their side in a moment, determined to put an end to the war at once if fortune favoured his arm. The combatants were well and equally matched in skill and strength, and at the end of some minutes, the count, worked up to the highest excitement at finding himself unable to gain any advantage, feigned to give way a moment, then watching his opportunity when Henry had just aimed an ineffectual blow at him, raised his sword with both hands and

discharged so tremendous a stroke on
versary's helmet that part of the
gold was hewn off, and the King fell
to his horse's neck, while the blood
ran out in a stream from his mouth and
between the bars of his visor. See
totter and reel, D'Evreux sprung forward
dropping his sword, caught him by the sleeve
while he sought to draw the small dagger
hung at his side (called a misericord)
shouted in triumph, "Yield thee, tyrant,
usurper—yield thee, rescue or no rescue."
Fortunately for the count, however, the
stupor was but momentary, and recovered
the instant, they grappled together, while
three other knights and Prince William
the imminent danger of their sovereign
lay upon them, and the gallant D'Evreux
made prisoner through his own im-
courage.

Strangely enough, at the same moment almost, Louis of France found himself in similar jeopardy. William of Normandy had been separated from him in the tumultuous rush of the charge, and each separately were giving proofs that if personal bravery and strength were the requisite qualifications for a sovereign, they each possessed enough to entitle them to the crowns of the two countries, which the one claimed and the other possessed. King Louis (like the Count of Evreux) penetrated into the ranks of the opposite party, vociferating his cry of "Mont-joye St. Denis!" and, for the moment, was without a single adherent near his person. A young Gascon of Henry's camp, whose boastings were the constant amusement of his comrades, saw him, at a little distance, laying about him like a fabled champion of romance.

"See there!" cried his companions, recognising the monarch by his embroidered surcoat, "close



and will. though the y
after the fashion of h
nevertheless possessed ac
not require the additiona
laugh which proceeded
those nearest him. He s
tered an invocation to
dashed on through the 1
tered Louis in person, 1
overthrowing a knight on
deigned to notice the priv
upon him in a moment, 1
from his grasp.

“ Holla ! comrades !” sl
con, “ the King is taken
France is taken !”

of this chapter, “Knowest thou not that at chess the King is *never* taken !” So saying, he snatched a heavy mace from the saddlebow of the fallen knight, and dealt so sudden and irresistible a blow with it on the head of his would-be conqueror, that the unfortunate Gascon sunk dead at his feet without a groan. By this time, however, Louis perceived the peril he was in of being surrounded, and turning round, put spurs to his black charger, whose enormous size and weight enabled the monarch to bear down all that opposed him and regain his own party.

But though William of Normandy had in the meantime been performing feats of valour sufficient to swell this account to an unreasonable length, if related in detail, yet fortune had begun to declare against him. King Henry had succeeded in rallying his troops, which had been thrown into confusion



self obliged to retreat by
with the French monarch
accomplished their end &
into Noyon. Oftener than
his own safety, did the
turn back, and engage with
pursuers as they pressed
pang of vexation and
through him as he heard
George for merry England
him on the breeze, as though
with dust and blood, their
terred in the fight, and the
defaced.

Thus ended this encounter
like a festal tournament

tively ; and that the ponderous defensive armour worn by the knights was so effectual a protection, that out of the whole number no more than four or five lost their lives on the plain of Brenneville that day.*

* Historical, as well as the whole of the details of the engagement.

CHAPTER X.

THE EMBARKATION.

“ Fair smiles the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
As proudly gliding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant pomp the gilded vessel goes,
Youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm.”

GRAY.

IT was not very long after the scene we have attempted to give a sketch of to the reader in the last chapter, that the fortress of Gisors, which again fell into the power of King Henry, received an unwonted and honoured guest within its walls. This was no other than Pope Callistus in person, who arrived with a long train of tonsured and peaceful ecclesiastics, to endeavour,

as he said, to put an end to the bloodshed and strife between two Christian princes, whose arms ought to be turned against the infidels in Palestine, rather than fomenting quarrels between themselves. To do the pontiff justice, he urged upon Henry with all the eloquence he was master of, the injustice and cruelty of detaining his brother in a prison at Cardiff, while his son was obliged to wander from place to place as an adventurer.

But Henry, though he received the pope with the utmost deference and respect, was a master of all the arts of equivocation and argument; on the ecclesiastical matters which Callistus brought forward, the latter was obliged to remain contented with much fewer concessions than he had flattered himself he should have been able to obtain from the English monarch; and on the subject of the brother and nephew of the latter, it was equally impracticable to make any im-



situation, and Duke
every respect possible.
believe the injurious
and, finally, contrived
to take no farther steps
negotiate a peace betwe
which accordingly took
difficult to conceive he
was brought to agree to
recognised the peaceabl
mandy by Henry, and
William as its duke, on
homage to the King of
ceremony the father co
without derogating from
sovereign of England.)

deserted by his warmest friends, and left once more without other resources than his sword and a good conscience, quitted the court of Louis le Gros suddenly and in disgust, without leaving any trace by which it might be known what part of the world might be his future destination.

We must, however, leave him for the present, and follow in our narration the footsteps of his victorious rival.

The little sea-port of Honfleur, at the mouth of the Seine, had, on a sudden, become the scene of unusual bustle and gaiety. Numerous ships, decked with many-coloured streamers, were lying in the harbour, and the cheerful voices of the sailors were heard from the shore, where they found an echo in the merriment of part of the army of King Henry, who was on the point of embarkation, with his son and the principal nobility of Normandy and England,

the triumphant joy of th
had succeeded to his v
favoured him with her bi
the evening before his de
round him was more gay
for the mood of a monarch
reflected by the obsequies
when it was announced
sought his presence to cra

“ The knave knows well
said the King ; “ but no man
his boon may be,—admit I

Accordingly, our acquaintance
was ushered in with much
formality, to the great surprise of
King.

“ Why, how now, friend

other knelt low before his footstool ; “ what new device hast thou to perplex us withal ?”

“ I rise not from this spot, my Liege, till I hear that my boon is granted,” replied Fitz-Stephen.

“ Out with it, man,” cried the King, with a smile ; “ if ’tis anything in reason I grant it thee freely.”

“ Then, Sire, I claim its performance. I have here a vessel with fifty rowers, and better never ploughed salt water between this and England. My father, Sire, conveyed your father, the Conqueror, from Normandy to Hastings, when he won his English crown ; I am indebted to your bounty for all I have ;— one favour more is what I crave in return. Let me convey your royal person across the seas to-morrow, in my bonny ship, the “ Blanche Nef ;” she well deserves the honour, for lighter and swifter than her no bark can dance over

“ Right willingly, fri
seas with you,” said th
not already made choice
look not so dismal, mai
thee thy boon ; thou sha
Normandy, if not the *I*
son *William* shall be
Will that content thee ?

Fitz-Stephen thanked
few minutes the Earl of
Countess of Perth, the
with many others of the n
had asked, and obtained
which promised to be n
of pleasure than any othe

The next morning Fi
highest possible snirite. T

the day was bright and fair, the sky cloudless, and the sea calm as a mirror, with a gentle south breeze in the exact direction that he could wish. In his anxiety to do homage to his illustrious guests, he provided a handsome banquet on deck, with musicians and jongleurs for their entertainment; and song and jest sounded in succession among the light-hearted company, while the shore was lined with spectators of all ranks. Hour after hour wore away in this manner, till some one suggested to Fitz-Stephen that the King's ship had already sailed some time before, as well as the rest of the little fleet.

“ And what of that ? ” cried he, “ think ye that the *Blanche Nef* is not able to overtake them, if they had been gone a whole day ? —ay, by my troth, and pass them too ! as you shall see, when we arrive first at Southampton.” So saying, he filled another flagon to the Prince's

health, and again the laugh went round as they pledged him in the sparkling Bourdeaux, while the voice of the heir-apparent was heard louder in mirth than the rest.

King Henry, in the meantime, had embarked early in the morning, and arrived safely at Southampton with a favourable wind. Crowds of people poured down to the landing-place to greet their victorious monarch after his long absence. Still, as the King stepped on shore, among all the figures that met his eye there seemed something that arrested his attention in an unusual manner, for he grasped the arm of the knight nearest him with a tremulous hand as he pointed towards the old and weather-beaten ramparts which frowned above them.

“ Seest thou that strange gesture?—what can she mean?”

The knight looked in the direction the King pointed out, but could see nothing.

“There!” repeated Henry, in a low voice, “at the corner of the turret, where the wall-flowers spring out between the stones. What does that diminutive old hag mean by pointing her finger at me?”

“Nay, my Liege, I see nought but the old grey stones, and the weeds growing over the archway; no human being could find footing there without falling headlong.”

“It is that which troubles me,” returned the King. “I know that it must be a delusion, and yet I see that mocking old woman, with her wreath of poisonous berries round her head, seeming to mock me, as plainly as I see thee at this moment!”

“Heaven preserve you, my Liege, from such distempered fancies!” ejaculated the knight, crossing himself.

King Henry looked round at some other object for a moment, and when his eyes reverted to the place, the figure was no longer visible.

The next day the first inquiries of the King were for his son; but to his surprise he learnt that the vessel had not yet made its appearance.

“Strange!” thought he; “yet perhaps that careless boy may have delayed too late to sail, and was forced to wait till the next day to push off from shore!”

The next day came; but still no news to relieve his anxiety. The third day passed over, equally without any tidings of Fitz-Stephen’s ship, till the evening put an end to his suspense.

The day was still calm and clear, and the setting sun fell upon the beautiful woods that slope down to the shores of the arm of the sea which forms the inland lake called Southampton Water, lighting up their decaying foliage with

a thousand rich tints. But though the King looked forth every now and then on the scene, as he paced up and down in his apartment in the castle, his thoughts were far otherwise occupied, in scanning the probability (it was now almost the *possibility*) of the Prince having reached some other harbour on the coast; but when he reflected on the perfect tranquillity of the sea, the continued absence of the vessel seemed inexplicable.

Suddenly, a chamberlain entered, with the signs of the utmost consternation on his face; but in answer to Henry's inquiries he only turned his head away, and pointed to the open doorway. A man of the lower classes, a butcher by profession, had been found clinging to a mast at sea, and brought to Southampton by some fishermen; they were ushering him to the presence of the King.

The catastrophe which the unhappy father

lasted so long, that when the
there was no one on board in
take the helm. They coasted
of Normandy for a little time,
want of a steersman, struck upon
rock, and rapidly began to sink.
was lowered in haste, and the P
escaped in her without difficult
as they were clear of the ill-
heard the shrieking of female voi
round, saw his sister extending h
him for succour. It was not in
to neglect such an appeal, and
sequences, he ordered the boat
her assistance. The sequel may b
such numbers crowded into that

narrator was enabled, by swimming and supporting himself at intervals with fragments of the wreck, to keep his head above water till the next morning, when the first object he saw was Fitz-Stephen, clinging to the broken mast.

“Is the Prince saved?” cried he, as soon as the butcher was able to approach him; and on being answered with a negative, he exclaimed, “Then I will never survive him!” and instantly quitting his hold, the waves closed over his head, leaving but *one* survivor of all those who embarked, to tell their fate.

During this painful narrative, the King stood in breathless attention, with his eyes fixed like a statue’s upon the speaker. One of the attendants, seeing how white the King’s countenance had become, approached to support him, but he was too late, and the unfortunate parent fell heavily to the ground in a state of temporary insensibility.

For many days following this sudden blow, he remained in a stupor of grief at his loss; and when he at length recovered in some degree, it is recorded that *he never was known to smile afterwards.*

The labour of a whole lifetime spent in the paths of crooked and deep policy, and in perpetually recurring warfare alternately, was rendered useless in a moment; for no male heir remained to him to whom it had been his darling project to leave the realms of England, Normandy, and other provinces, united into one powerful kingdom. The sovereign of such extensive territories—rich, powerful, dreaded by his enemies—he was at that time a more pitiable object of compassion than the most destitute houseless beggar in all his dominions !

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

“ Preluding light, were strains of music heard,
As once again revolved that measured sand.”

DON RODERIC.—SCOTT.

ONCE more we must request the reader to suppose that a considerable time has elapsed since the events related in the last few chapters. Seven times had the harvest ripened and been cut down on the plains of Brenneville since the date of the important, though not sanguinary, contest which took place on its surface, when our scene again opens in one of the fertile valleys through which the Loire pursues its way near the ancient city of Angiers.

Two or three travellers had stopped to rest their horses during the heat in the middle of the day, on a sloping piece of turf, shaded by some spreading walnut trees, which commanded a view of the broad and noble river flowing below, through vineyards and cornfields, interspersed with pleasant groves towards the capital of Anjou. The principal figure of the group seated on the grass was a knight, who had just laid aside his heavy steel headgear to enjoy more at his ease the prospect before him, and the cooling breeze which played around them from the river. Though still young, the sun and wind had tanned his handsome though rather melancholy features sufficiently to give him the appearance of being older than he really was, which was increased by the dark mustachios which curled over his upper lip. Near him was a slight, delicate-looking page, with a complexion which might almost be supposed to be darkened by

some artificial means (so unusually deep an olive was its tint), clad in a loose tunic, and a “gittern,” as it was called, or small harp, such as wandering musicians used, lying by his side. Behind them were two grooms attending to their horses, one of whom had just deposited against the stem of one of the trees his master’s shield and lance, the device on the former of which was a lion couchant bound with a chain.

The knight was the first to break silence.

“I marvel much, Hubert,” said he, addressing the page,—“I marvel that during the five years thou hast accompanied me in my wanderings thou hast never yet mentioned thy country or parents.”

“My lord!” said the page, with a deep sigh, “I have already prayed to be excused from that question; already I have said that I am an orphan, and without a home. If I have served you well and faithfully, let me remain unques-

tioned and serve you still as before. If pressed on that point I must leave you—perhaps, in any case, I shall be forced to do so ere long."

"Thou art a strange wayward boy," returned the knight; "but thy ready wit and quickness have rendered me good service; nor can I forget or be ungrateful, when I remember I owed my life and liberty to them probably in the tournament at Cologne, a year ago. But come, why lookest thou so melancholy when fortune has taken a turn in my favour just now, and I find myself once more on the banks of this river, where I passed so many happy hours as a boy."

The page looked down without answering.

"How well I remember each object," continued the knight. "There stands the little hermitage still, near the water side. But come, Hubert, let not thy harp lay idle; let me hear thy voice once more. A lay of love and lady

bright let it be, for thou knowest the wandering knight is now the suitor of a rich heiress, and fair, too, if fame lies not."

The page struck a few notes of a wild and melancholy character, to the surprise of his master, who expected a more cheerful prelude, and began the following romance:—

LA BELLE ISOLDE.

Fair blew the summer breeze,
And light careered the bark
T'wards Cornwall's rocky shores,
That owned for lord, King Mark.

And on the deck a bride
Of wond'rous beauty sheen,
And, as her guide, a knight
Of gallant port, were seen.

For Cornwall's King was old,
His hair with silver grey ;
His nephew led that bride
Upon her seaward way.

A jewelled cup they raise,
Each, thoughtless, tastes in turn,
When both with sudden love
Towards each other burn.

Her mother's hand had mixed
That mystic potion rare,
To work a mutual love
Between the royal pair.

Alas ! the fair Isolde !
Ill-fated was the hour
Thy lips that chalice pressed,
Thy bosom owns its power.

Sir Tristram, famed in song,
In front of battle tried,
Forgetful of his faith,
He loves his uncle's bride !

Through dangers and through years,
Still did their love endure ;
That philtres wild effects,
No priest, no leech, could cure.

'Twere long to tell the woes
That guilty pair befell ;
Till death their passion quenched,
They loved—and loved too well.

“ Pshaw !” ejaculated the knight, “ hast thou
nothing more suitable than that old legend ;
always some dismal sentiment ! Come, give me
thy harp ; I will try that lay of the German
minnesänger ; though, to say truth, my hand

and voice are both of them somewhat rough for the task. Runs it not thus?"—and as he spoke he struck a few notes, by no means unskillfully, and began, with a half smile at his own performance, in a voice which he had himself much undervalued, the following lines :—

"Tis sweet to breathe the rich perfume
When maids the wreathing roses twine ;
"Tis sweet to drain the sparkling bowl
That mantles high with Gascon wine.

Yet higher bounds the Norman's heart
When splintered lances round him fly—
When conquered foemen fall around
The victor shouts his battle-cry !

But softer, deeper feelings rise,
When graceful smiles each lovely dame ;
He sees a polestar in those eyes,
While Virtue leads him on to fame."*

* If the ideas of this song may appear to some too refined for the time and age, it can only be observed in return, that they are those of chivalry in its purity, before it was corrupted in latter times ; and that a translation of the antiquated language of the original was necessary, to make it intelligible to the reader.

As the knight finished this song, the page, who had turned away his head for a moment, thought he perceived some person watching them from among the bushes in the direction of the hermitage; but, however that might be, the next moment the attention of both was drawn to a splendid cavalcade that now came in sight along the banks of the river. Pages in showy dresses, huntsmen with long poles, with the adjuncts of the chace, falcons, hounds, and mettled horses, swelled the train, and communicated a joyous and magnificent air to the whole equipage, which was that of one of the great feudal lords of the time, who himself rode in the centre, conspicuous by his air of superiority, and also marked with a large cross embroidered on his breast, as well as upon his cloak. The knight remounted hastily, and rode to meet them, followed by his attendants, and on joining them, their lord, the powerful Count of Anjou and Maine, welcomed him cordially to his do-

minions with every expression of regard, as well as a venerable personage on the right hand of the count. The wheel of fortune had, indeed, taken a turn; for the wandering knight, who was so warmly greeted once more by Foulques of Anjou as his future son-in-law, was the same Prince who had been so long suffering under the winter of her frowns. It might be that the public meeting and the profuseness of his expressions of joy were adopted by the politic count to avoid the unpleasant feelings which the recollection of his desertion of William's cause, in former years, must have given rise to; but if such was the intention of the former, the mind of the latter was too generous to preserve a suspicious resentment against him, setting down his previous conduct to—most probably its true cause—ambition. In proportion as the Count of Anjou perceived this from the frank, unconstrained demeanour of William of Normandy, during their ride to the city of Angiers, which

was at no great distance, he recovered his equanimity, and the party became soon as cheerful as becomes people who are about to be present at a matrimonial celebration.

The heiress of Foulques (the twice betrothed and once widowed bride) had grown up during the interval of our story from a child to a handsome, dignified woman, and was not too fastidious for our hero to be able to make himself agreeable to her; though certainly there was something in the unexpectedness of their union, after all that had passed, and the shortness of the time which was to elapse before the ceremony, which might be thought embarrassing. However, no difficulty interposed itself, and immediately on their arrival at Angiers, the count publicly announced that he resigned the sovereignty of Maine, as his daughter's dowry to her husband, reserving Anjou for his other children, while he himself purposed, within a few weeks after their marriage, to

fulfil his vow, in token of which he wore the cross, and join the army of crusaders in Syria.

The evening of William's arrival was marked with joyful festivity; all the pomp of a feudal court, all the splendour and refinement which were then known, were displayed on the occasion in the halls of Foulques of Anjou, where our hero had passed so many of his early hours. Sir Helie de St. Saen was there, and Tyrrel, with his son, who was now in possession of the castle and territory of Catnoir, and a cheerful satisfaction reigned on every face excepting one. This was Hubert, the page of William of Normandy, who seemed to shrink from observation as he wandered gloomily about, or leant against one of the clustered pillars which supported the vaulted roof of the hall where so exhilarating a scene was passing before his eyes, watching with a kind of melancholy abstraction the crowds of ushers and servitors as they passed and repassed the place where he stood.

Some time had passed in this manner, when the page was accosted by a person wrapped in a dark cloak, who emerged from the crowd and placed a small slip of parchment in his hand with an earnest injunction to deliver it to his master himself; and then, before Hubert could recover from his surprise, glided off among the numerous groups who thronged the hall, and disappeared. As soon as the page's eye glanced over the writing, his first impulse was to hurry after the individual who had brought it; but notwithstanding his eagerness, his researches and inquiries among the numerous retainers who thronged the courts and staircases were, to his infinite vexation, all fruitless.

After the banquet was concluded and the guests had risen from table and dispersed, William of Normandy called his page towards him, and was informed of the occurrence, as Hubert put the slip of writing into his hand; it contained these words—

“ If thou wilt repair, *alone*, to the hermitage on the banks of the river, an hour before midnight, thou mayst hear tidings of thy father from Cardiff.”

“ I will go, and that without delay!” exclaimed William, disregarding the remonstrances of the page; “ it is some friend who fears the vengeance of my usurping uncle, doubtless.” And wrapping a large cloak round him, armed only with his sword and short dagger, he proceeded to make his way out of the castle to pursue his nocturnal adventure.

The retired spot in question was but a short distance from the city, closely screened on the land side by some bushes, which reached down almost to the water’s edge, where the bank sloped somewhat abruptly, and there was also a large osier-bed, bordered with tall reeds. A solitaire had established himself there in former times, and a little shrine of the Madona

still remained to receive the occasional veneration of those who passed in boats up and down the stream, though the little dwelling was now deserted by its usual inmate. The appointed hour had scarcely arrived when our hero approached the place, and the moon was just rising behind the thick foliage of the trees under which he had halted in the morning ; though her rays had began to touch the stream with silver, yet the side of the bank where he was lay still in the blackest shadow, and no glimmer of light was visible from the window of the little tenement where he expected to learn some particulars of his unfortunate parent. William of Normandy paused for a few minutes ; the place, the hour, and the cause of his being there, combined to raise a melancholy series of ideas in his mind. As he mused, he thought that he distinguished the muffled sound of the dash of oars in the direction of the osiers, but it was so uncertain and momentary that he paid little

heed, and passed on to the open space before the hermitage.

A man cautiously disguised stepped forward to meet him, with a remark on his punctuality, and engaged him in a discourse of deep interest to our adventurer, who scarcely perceived that in the course of their conversation the stranger insensibly conducted his steps nearer and nearer to the edge of the river, when the latter suddenly halted, and clapping his hands, five or six men sprung up from the concealment of the reeds and willows, and rushed upon the son of Duke Robert, to disarm him. But though William was thus unexpectedly surrounded, and prevented from making use of his long cross-handled sword, he was able to snatch his poniard from its sheath and plunge it into the treacherous individual who had betrayed him into this ambuscade. Strength, youth, and activity, enabled him to struggle against his

assailants for a few moments, but he was, before long, overpowered by numbers, who had already secured his arms, and were about to put him into a boat which lay in waiting, in whose bottom they had already deposited their wounded comrade, when at that critical moment, the page, accompanied by several knights and armed followers, rushed down to the scene of action. The contest was renewed with double fierceness, and Hubert having contrived to cut the bonds with which they had bound his master's arms, William quickly struck down two of his enemies, and the rest found themselves obliged to sue for mercy.

The first impulse of every one, as soon as the men were secured, was to question them as to their employer; but here their answers were vague and unsatisfactory; they had been engaged to kidnap the Prince (whose rank they seemed ignorant of), and to convey him down

the Loire to Nantes, where a vessel was in waiting to receive him ; but to what place he was to have been further conveyed, or at whose command, they knew not. Their orders had been received from the man who now lay wounded in the boat, who had paid them highly for their services beforehand. To this individual the attention of all was accordingly drawn ; and as the moon-beams had now reached the spot where he was placed, his features were distinctly visible in their cold light, which by their convulsive workings and deathly paleness warned the bystanders that a short time only remained in which he would be able to reply to their questions. He was raised up accordingly, but refused, at first, to give any answers, and sensible of the approach of death, asked earnestly for a priest ; none, however, was within reach of the solitary spot, and he groaned despairingly.

have injured ; what cause has so base an attempt ? Make while thy speech yet remains ,” knights who stood by .

He rolled his eyes towards made no answer .

“ Speak ! thou treacherous William of Normandy . “ What done of harm towards thee or shouldst lay such a snare for me ?

A bitter smile came over the countenance as he made a sign to William to draw his head nearer , for life was ebbing away . The words came faintly upon the ear . “ I was fearful as he spoke — “ Not only has thy father crossed my path , but thy father has crossed my path , perhaps , — but I have had a

red-hot copper basin, which dried up those eyes that once —”

William of Normandy started with a shiver of horror ; but the sentence remained uncompleted, and Matthieu, the barber-surgeon of Cardiff, was no more.

The next day the page sought his master early ; and the latter was surprised to see him prepared for a journey, and evidently under the influence of some great excitement. His hands quivered, but his voice did not falter as he explained to William that the time was come when they must part for ever.

“ Part for ever, boy !” exclaimed the Prince. “ Why, what strange fancies hast thou got now in that head of thine ? And at the moment when I shall be enabled to reward thee for the life thy quickness and vigilance has preserved ! But thou art trembling like an aspen-leaf ? Art ill, Hubert ?”

The page's tremor increased. Instead of allowing himself to remain in the seat on which William obliged him to sit down, he slid to the ground on his knees, and seizing the friendly hand which the other had laid on his arm, covered it with kisses, and this act of homage once performed, stood upright, and spoke as follows :—

“ My Liege, for so let me still call you,—as long as William of Normandy wandered an exile and an outcast, the poor page might make himself useful ; but now it is otherwise. You will have a fair province to rule over, with knights, and squires, and servitors, at your beck, and you will need his services no more. I go—where your eyes will never again behold me ; but if I have served you truly and faithfully, grant me this one request. Delay the ceremony which makes you the son-in-law of the Count of Anjou for three days after my departure ; and then,

may all happiness wait upon your future days, more than I ever felt or *can* feel."

The bridegroom was taken by surprise at this extraordinary speech, and still more unaccountable request; but finding the page immovable in his determination to quit him, gave a reluctant assent.

"Is there nothing I can do for thee, Hubert; thou shalt not go from Angiers empty-handed. Is there aught besides thy strange request which is in my power?" asked William.

"Only this; think sometimes of Hubert, who will also remember your welfare in his daily prayers." With these words he raised his master's hand once more to his lips; and then, as if doubting his own firmness, sprung hastily out of the apartment, to the astonishment of the Earl of Anjou and Robert Tyrrel, who were entering.

We need not recapitulate here all the ceremonies and festivities which accompanied the

marriage of our hero, nor the parting with the warlike count, who soon after took his departure for the Holy Land, where his distinguished valour and talents gained him the hand of a princess, and induced the army of the crusaders to place him as her father's successor on the throne of Jerusalem. The following year, Louis of France conferred the vacant earldom of Flanders on young William of Normandy (to which he had some claims by hereditary descent), and the fair and rich cities of the Netherlands opened their gates to him as their new lord.

It is to be wished that our tale could terminate here, but history requires us to add that the unrelenting animosity of his uncle still pursued him, and caused a divorce to be pronounced between him and his bride, on the ground of consanguinity—a point not easily to be determined or cleared up, when registries were unknown, and writing confined to a few. Neither

did he live long to enjoy his new dominions ; for in the autumn of 1128, he died of a wound received as he pursued his enemies to the walls of the little town called Alost, near Brussels.

The page kept his word, for no traces of him did William of Normandy ever discover ; but within the three days specified in the parting request, the sisterhood of the celebrated Abbey of Fontevrault received a new inmate within their walls. Her history she divulged to none ; but simply desired herself to be called *Sister Berthilde*.

Some time afterwards the widow of the unfortunate nephew of King Henry joined the recluses, and the friendship which afterwards was formed between her and sister Berthilde seemed to have its foundation in some cause of sorrow common to both, for they were often seen *weeping together* by their cloistered companions.

NOTE.

The unfortunate Duke Robert survived his son, and died under very painful circumstances in the 34th year of Henry's reign.

I may be reproached, perhaps, with having drawn the character of that monarch in too unfavourable a point of view; but we must remember that while he was equally tyrannical as his brother William II., he added the stain of treachery and calculating systematic meanness. The monastic historians have, however, praised him beyond his deserts, for the great qualities he undoubtedly possessed, as a friend to the church, while his more generous brother has been painted in the darkest colours. See page 163. Vol. I.

THE END.

